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Acculturation Experiences of Latina Immigrants in

Suffolk County, New York: A Grounded Theory Study

by

Jennifer Wood

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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This study examines the process of acculturation for female Latina immigrants in Suffolk County, New York. Thirty in-depth audiotaped interviews were conducted with adult women who were born in Mexico, El Salvador, or Ecuador and a theoretical model for acculturation was constructed using grounded theory methodology. The model reflects the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants. It also provides a number of factors involved in the acculturative process and attainment of acculturative goals for the participants. Social, psychological, cultural, and environmental supports and barriers are presented that impact the acculturative process. Findings suggest that the level of acculturation attained resulted from decisions made by the participants and their perceptions of their own autonomy and empowerment. Implications are provided for social work theory, practice, research, and public policy.

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VITA

Jennifer Wood was born in Phoenix, Arizona and relocated to Smithtown, New York as an infant, where she was raised by her mother, Elaina Pickwoad. She attended St. Joseph's College in Patchogue, New York as an undergraduate, earning her bachelor's degree in December 2001 in Psychology, with minors in Political Science and Spanish. She discovered social work through her aunt Jeanne G. Halpern-Lewis, a clinical social worker, and gained a desire to alleviate oppression for vulnerable individuals. Jennifer received her Master of Social Work degree from Stony Brook University in 2009.

Upon receiving her degree and subsequent professional licensure, Jennifer continued work with a regional not-for-profit human services agency in a new role as a clinical social worker. She worked with immigrants, children, individuals with HIV/AIDS, and individuals in recovery from substance abuse, all while beginning classes in the Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare doctoral program. Jennifer spent over a year in a group private social work practice with a variety of diverse clients, but her goal is to be a macro social worker in the role of educator and community organizer. Having taught as an adjunct lecturer at Stony Brook University, Jennifer brings her professional practice experience to the classroom to support educate, and empower student social workers as they enter the field.

As the focus of her dissertation suggests, Jennifer is committed to issues of social and economic justice as a professional social worker, as an educator and scholar, and in every area of her life, and is dedicated to the empowerment of oppressed and vulnerable persons.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

Throughout the course of my study in the field of social welfare, I found there is extensive evidence of the oppression and marginalization of minority populations, which can include individuals who are considered part of vulnerable racial or ethnic groups. I conducted a qualitative study of women identifying as Latina immigrants living in Suffolk County, New York, who have traditionally been oppressed on the basis of both ethnicity and gender (Lopez, 2013). This grounded theory study builds on existing frameworks of acculturation, which is the process by which immigrants and their new environment adapt to each other. Current theories on acculturation (Berry, 1997; Cohen, 2010) do not adequately explain the process by which a Latina female acculturates to the host culture or why she may not acculturate. No one of these theories is inclusive of all dimensions of the acculturation process, nor do they account for the fluidity and reciprocity of that process. Additionally, existing theories do not take into account the influence of strengths, resilience, or intangible resources of immigrant populations. Thus, in understanding the experiences of Latina immigrants acclimating to a diverse and densely populated demographic region, I have developed an updated theory on acculturation for use in future studies. I have also identified implications for future research, social work education, social work practice, and policy.

The Importance of this Study

When examining the current political climate in the United States, it is evident that immigration and related policies are an ongoing source of conflict and contention. Proposals to reform these policies, such as legislation introduced in Arizona in recent years, tend to trigger fairly extreme reactions (from social activism to acts of hostility and violence) in affected communities, whether in favor of reform or in opposition. In 2010, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed into law the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act (introduced as Arizona Senate Bill 1070 and thus often referred to simply as Arizona SB 1070). This was a legislative act in the U.S. state of Arizona that, at the time of passage, was the strictest anti-immigrant measure in recent history (LIIA, 2014). The law required that enforcement officers determine legal status of an assumed or suspected immigrant in conjunction with any lawful search and seizure or at-will legal contact. The law also imposed penalties on any individual found to be harboring or otherwise assisting an undocumented immigrant. In short, the Bill facilitated racial profiling by Arizona law enforcement. In 2012, the Supreme Court struck down several provisions of the Bill while still permitting document checks during law enforcement stops (Long Island Immigrant Alliance, 2014).

Immigration is an issue that is very much in the public forefront by sheer virtue of the number of foreign-born individuals living in the United States (nearly eight million non-citizens as of 2010, which does not account for undocumented individuals) (United States Census, 2010). It should be noted that the highest concentrations of immigrants reside in five states that carry a large portion of electoral votes and thus have the ability

to impact electoral outcomes and the passage of legislation: New York, California, Florida, Texas, and Illinois.

According to the Department of Homeland Security (2011), over one million individuals became lawful permanent residents (LPRs) in 2011. This means that over one million people who came to the United States from other countries became legal residents, either through filing for residency or becoming naturalized United States citizens. These are options currently available only to those who came to the United States legally. In that same year, nearly forty million individuals obtained non-immigrant visas for temporary activity within the United States, which allow for work, study, and travel for a finite time (usually six months to a year) and may be renewed under certain conditions. Also in 2011, 135.6 million individuals were exempt from the need for standard-format visas due to their possession of laser visas from Canada and Mexico. Laser visas are a form of passport for use within North America, often taking the form of enhanced state driver's licenses or state-issued identification cards with microchips. Additionally, a comparatively small number of immigrants entered the United States under refugee status (56,384 in 2011) (Department of Homeland Security, 2011)). Refugee and asylum status are granted on a case-by-case basis to individuals who are at a credible risk of endangerment should they return to their countries of origin; this could be the result of war or political conflict, persecution or fear of persecution, or natural disaster.

Also according to the Department of Homeland Security (2011) and the United States Census Bureau (2010), there are millions of foreign-born individuals living in the United States who are not authorized to reside here (undocumented immigrants),

whether they came to the United States without following proper protocol, utilized false documentation to enter the country, or have expired visas. The number of such individuals is estimated at over seven million nationally (USCIS, 2010). There are various reasons for an individual to emigrate without authorization: cost-prohibitive protocol; lengthy immigration procedures; criminal records; fulfillment of visa quotas; health quarantines (USCIS, 2010).

According to the United States Center for Immigration Studies (2010), the financial cost of following accepted protocol to emigrate legally is such that it can be very difficult or impossible to earn sufficient funds if living in an impoverished or underdeveloped nation. For example, it can cost a single adult legally emigrating from Ecuador to the United States in excess of $15,000, which does not account for the cost of the travel itself. A study by the Rural Poverty Portal (2012) found that 57.6% of those in rural Ecuador live in poverty compared to others in the country. Thus, for a majority of those living in Ecuador, it would be financially unfeasible to relocate using legal channels.

The United States Center for Immigrant Studies (2010) identified several barriers to legal immigration. The wait to get a visa varies greatly depending on the country of origin, quotas set by Congress, and the individual profile of the applicant. It may take only a few months to receive a student visa with proof of acceptance to a university, but often the wait for legal immigration with the intention of permanent relocation can be as long as ten years or more. This is a process that can be stalled both by the government of the country of origin as well as by the United States government. Congress institutes annual quotas limiting the number of people allowed to enter the United States from

each country, which is a practice originating in the Immigration Act of 1924 (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 2001).

In addition, there are conditions which may restrict immigrants from being granted permission to enter the United States apart from quotas, wait times, and fees: illness and criminal activity. Applying for a visa always involves extensive background investigations, and individuals convicted of certain crimes (violent crimes, drug-related offenses) are not permitted to enter the United States (United States Department of State, 2014). Additionally, people diagnosed with any of a number of medical conditions are considered inadmissible to the United States and are screened prior to granting entry. These medical conditions include infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, Hansen disease, and sexually transmitted diseases; mental disorders associated with harmful behavior; and substance abuse or addiction (United States Centers for Disease Control, 2013). Thus, in order to escape abhorrent or unsafe living conditions or persecution, individuals facing any of these barriers are left, in their view, with no option but to relocate to the United States, a nation filled with such (relative) opportunity and promise, by any means available or necessary, which included illegal entry (USCIS, 2010).

Of all individuals who immigrate to the United States alone (meaning without accompanying family members), an estimated 75% leave behind in their countries of origin family members including parents, siblings, spouses/partners, and children (USCIS, 2010). In many cases, the aforementioned costs associated with legal immigration are considerable for one person, and entirely prohibitive in the case of relocating an entire family to the United States. When considering unauthorized or

undocumented relocation, that process can be very difficult and dangerous on an individual basis, and impossibly so for an entire family, particularly with young children (No More Deaths, 2013). Numerous accounts have been given of crossings in which people have been assaulted, killed, or injured. Women traveling alone are vulnerable to sexual assaults. Immigrants crossing the Mexican border are also at risk of discovery by law enforcement officers and those who otherwise prey on undocumented individuals, and there are also deaths as a result of poor nutrition and exposure to the elements during the journey. If a person has immigrated illegally, it is also very dangerous to attempt to return the country of origin due to the risks of either punitive measures upon return or inability to go back to the United States (Parker, 2007).

In its most recent report, it is estimated by the USCIS (2010) that individuals of Hispanic origin account for approximately 15% of authorized immigrants, but nearly 90% of undocumented immigrants. Pew Hispanic Center (2011) estimates the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States in 2011 at 11.1 million. Of those staggering numbers, it is further estimated that approximately 63% of authorized immigrants and 34% of those without documentation are adult females, which indicates that there are several million Latina immigrants living in the United States of varying legal status, with a very high concentration in the New York City metropolitan area. As of 2010, the number of undocumented immigrants in the region was estimated at 645,000 (Fiscal Policy Institute, 2010). Thus, this is a significant and highly visible population deserving of in-depth study to understand their experiences adapting to a new culture.

Lum (2007) cites rapidly changing demographics (sharp increases in the number of people who identify as people of color, as well as members of other minority populations) in the United States and states that, with the increasing number of minority individuals and communities and their vulnerability in the current sociopolitical climate, social workers must be aware of the ways in which these populations are being marginalized and that members of that profession have a responsibility to work with them to eliminate oppression and help them to become empowered. A goal of the social work profession, per the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, is the promotion of diversity and the development and use of culturally competent practice (NASW, 2008). Culturally competent practice requires the worker to eschew cultural stereotypes and assumptions. Numerous stereotypes exist regarding the Hispanic population, and few cast them in a positive light (Timberlake & Williams, 2012). In order to work toward cultural competency, focus on such must begin during the process of educating social workers and utilize theoretical frameworks based on the construction of life meanings as perceived by the client system (Markovitsky & Mosek, 2006). The gold standard in social work has become that of evidence-based practice, meaning that the way social workers practice is guided by empirical research. If all accepted theories on acculturation are based on research that (implicitly or explicitly) reinforces cultural stereotypes and assumptions, social workers practicing with vulnerable immigrant populations will have great difficulty starting "where the client is" and engaging in respectful, culturally competent practice, as they will have preconceived images and ideas based on the evidence presented during the learning process.

Very little research exists on any post-19th Century immigrant population, much less the Latina population, that explores and highlights strengths of the community. The bulk of the literature is focused on families and youth (Cervantes & Cordova, 2011; Cort, 2009), with a great deal of attention paid to such issues as drug use (Wu et al, 2010), gang involvement (Valdez et al, 2006), disease and mental illness (Huang et al, 2011; Roncancio, 2011), domestic violence (Edelson et al, 2007), and incarceration (Percival, 2010). Most studies on Latinos in general have been quantitative and focused on measurable outcomes. The data yielded by such studies is certainly important to understanding concrete difficulties facing the Hispanic population. However, when there is an absence of data based on the perceptions of those affected and the research presented is rooted in numbers interpreted by the researchers, it can have the effect of reinforcing potentially harmful stereotypes (Lopez, 2013). This further marginalizes and oppresses a vulnerable community. With the knowledge that there is increasing pressure to engage in evidence-based practice from the Council on Social Work Education and the National Association of Social Workers, it becomes essential that the "evidence" upon which practice is based encompass not only perceived deficits and weaknesses of communities, but also their own perceptions of their needs and priorities for social and political intervention as well as their strengths and resources (Reyna, 2013).

Shi and Stevens (2005) assert that vulnerability is both enhanced and remedied by social forces. This means that just as power structures in a society have the ability to grant improved access to resources to sub-populations if they deem them worthy, they conversely have that same ability to restrict that access if the target community is

seen as unworthy. If such government policy is informed by research, it is necessary that research, particularly that involving vulnerable populations, be balanced.

In this study, I will explore and describe the life experiences of Latina immigrants in Suffolk County, New York in a way that allows their authentic voices to be heard. I will then use that information to develop a grounded theoretical model to explain the process of acculturation for these women.

United States Immigration and Related Policies – A Brief History

"The history of the United States has been marked by a constant stream of people from all over the world, seeking, for one reason or another, to settle in a new land. From the persecuted Pilgrims to the victims of the most recent ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, the U.S. has been perceived as the country where individuals and groups could reinvent themselves and their past" (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 2001, p. 50). The implication of this statement of history is that nearly all "Americans" are immigrants or descendants of immigrants.

After the establishment of the Unites States as a nation, perceptions of the freedoms and relative wealth to be found therein brought waves of individuals and families from other nations, beginning with Europeans around the turn of the 18th century. In particular, immigrants from Poland and Italy became prevalent in the late 1800s, considered the peak of "historical" immigration. In general, Polish and Italian nationals were considered "blue-collar" workers and, despite some limited mobility into white-collar, more highly paid work, that trend continued into the 1950s and beyond. Studies showed that, with subsequent generations removed from those original

immigrants, the percentage of those with white-collar jobs steadily increased. Quite often, children born into these families would escape the fate of being laborers and instead become proprietors of their own businesses, employing relatives and others of their heritage (Katz et al, 2007).

The first waves of European immigration did not, in comparison to subsequent migration patterns, result in any outcry or surge in positive or negative public opinion in connection with the "newcomers." That cannot be said of all migration trends, however. The mid 1800s saw a mass movement of Irish nationals (estimated at over a million) to the United States in response to conditions of extreme poverty and hunger in Ireland. In 1845, the Irish Potato Famine (a fungal infestation of the potato crops in Ireland) led to starvation, a myriad of infectious diseases, and mass deaths in Ireland, driving the people from their country to England, Canada and the United States (Mintz & McNeil, 2013). These Irish nationals traveled to the East Coast of the United States by the thousands in order to be a part of the "American prosperity;" however this massive influx was quickly regarded with suspicion and fear by those Americans already established, including early Irish immigrants (CRF, 2014).

Those newly arriving were faced with continuing poverty, outright hostility and discriminatory housing and hiring practices (CRF, 2014). This was the one of the first points in which incoming migrants were used as scapegoats for economic downturn, as the Irish were accused of and demonized for lowering wages and taking "American jobs" away from citizens. During the time of this shift in migration, new opportunities arose that provided some relief to Irish immigrants, including the opening of the Western frontier and extension of railways. This westward expansion, in fact, provided an

opening for relocation for many immigrant groups and began the cultural diffusion across the United States (Katz et al, 2007).

Despite the hostility aimed at the Irish, it was primarily economic in motivation as these immigrants, at least, shared similar "genetic markers" to the dominant culture. In short, while these perceived intruders were not "real" Americans, they were white and looked similar in appearance to the host population. Public sentiment underwent a rapid change when immigrants from outside of Europe made their way to the United States, including those from Asia and Latin America. These newcomers were regarded with extreme suspicion, as they looked very different, practiced unfamiliar religions, spoke different languages, and were culturally very divergent from Americans and Europeans. These differences were a source of fear that transcended the ranks of general society and ascended into the heights of government, who viewed this new "type" of immigrant as a threat not only to the economy, but also to the sanctity of the dominant American culture (Leal, 2011). The governmental response to this perceived threat was to begin the introduction of legislation meant, originally, to limit the role of the immigrant in the United States and to control the extent to which these newcomers could be allowed to "infiltrate" the culture and society (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 2001).

Legislation created to control and limit immigrant freedoms went hand-in-hand with the policies instituted to limit the freedoms of African-Americans (Rothenberg, 2004), another segment of the new American population that differed from the white majority. In addition, according to Katz et al (2007), as much of the American Southwest (a large portion of the newly opened frontier) had once been owned by Mexico, it stood to reason that many of the inhabitants would choose to remain

geographically stable and allow themselves to be absorbed by the United States just as the land was, which accounts for the primary introduction of Hispanic immigrants to the United States.

During the nineteenth century, the United States government maintained a laissez faire policy in which most of the regulation of immigration was left to state and local discretion. That changed by the late nineteenth century, at which time the federal government started developing immigration regulations not solely based on economic and national security interests, but also on ethnic and racial motivators. An example of can be seen in the introduction of the Chinese exclusion laws in the 1880s. During the 1920s and 1930s, a more restrictive immigration policy was developed, with the national origins quota system becoming the focus. This new policy, the Immigration Act of 1924, was intended to favor northern and western European immigrants while excluding other groups. With respect to Mexican migration, Mexicans were seen as a returnable workforce easily satisfying the temporary demand for unskilled, low-wage labor. Provisions of this legislation created the Border Patrol for monitoring travel between the United States and Mexico, but did not truly restrict it (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 2001).

The relatively lax policies regulating Mexican immigration changed during the Great Depression of the 1930s when the government, worried about jobs for Americans and the burden of welfare dependency, repatriated (deported) more than 400,000 Mexicans (Katz et al, 2007). In 1943, in response to the labor needs of American agriculture, the federal government initiated the Bracero Program, which allowed Mexicans to enter the United States as guest workers. This program ended in 1964, after Congress refused to reauthorize it as a result of the unexpectedly large influx of

migrant workers (Bush School of Government, 2010). Similarly, the aforementioned Chinese Exclusion Act was a reactionary measure to combat the continued migration of Asians to the United States after government-sponsored work programs (to support the development of the railroads and the mining industry) invited them to the United States in the first place.

The quota system was abandoned in 1965. Instead, in the 1960's, a family-based immigration system was implemented. Although it was designed to benefit European migrants, in reality it set off an unanticipated migration from developing, impoverished nations. Due to high unemployment and inflation levels during the 1970's, public opinion in the United States shifted in favor of lowering the levels of legal immigration and removing the concept of family cohesion as a basis for immigration. At that time, rates of illegal immigration began increasing in response to the new restrictions on immigration set forth by Congress, prompting citizens to demand more restrictions on eligibility criteria for entry and tougher border control. After years of intensive debate, in the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was created in 1986 to address illegal immigration (Lowell et al, 1995).

The IRCA was initially designed to discourage illegal immigration through penalties to U.S. employers who hired undocumented workers. The act included an amnesty program, which granted legal status to undocumented immigrants already residing in the country. Despite its efforts, IRCA failed mainly due to the federal government's inability to successfully implement employer sanctions. In 1990, the Immigration Act passed, which increased annual visas for immigrants that fit two criteria: possession of highly demanded skills, and with family already located in the

United States. However, this policy once again increased the public concern regarding both legal and illegal immigration. For this reason, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) was established in 1996. This act‘s main objective was to target both legal and illegal immigrants through the mechanism of welfare reform [by cutting ADFC and SSI] and restriction of due process rights in the case of criminal charges or challenge to legal immigration status (BSG, 2010).

While many assume that the growing number of immigrants legally admitted to the United States is the result of people crossing borders and entering the Unites States on a daily basis, the reality is that the majority of the new legal permanent residents (59 percent) were already in the country when their visas became available (BSG, 2010). Currently, Mexico is still a major source of U.S. immigration, but this number is decreasing. In 2000, 174,000 immigrants (20 percent) came from Mexico, as compared with 164,920 Mexican immigrants (14.6 percent) in 2009. Supporters of more rigorous immigration controls argue that immigration is on the rise, but recent research efforts of both legal and illegal immigration have found this number is actually declining (BGS, 2010). In fact, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) estimated that 11.6 million undocumented immigrants resided in the United States in January 2006, but by January 2009 DHS estimated this number had decreased to 10.7 million (DHS, 2011).

The immigration debate shows no signs of resolution and, in fact, has become an increasing topic of sociopolitical tension each year and with each election. In 2010, there were several high profile, well-publicized bills that were submitted before the 111th Congress: the Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity Act, Save America Comprehensive Immigration Act of 2009, Systematic

Alien Verification for Entitlement Act, Reuniting Families Act, H.R. 6080, and the DREAM Act of 2009. These bills are only a small sample of the numerous pieces of pending legislation filed in Congress that call for comprehensive immigration reform. The majority of the legislation either remains in committee or has died on the floor. However, each piece of legislation implies a common concern over the state of regulation of immigrants and related policy, and suggests that a balance must be struck between illegal immigration control and amnesty (Strug and Mason, 2002; BSG, 2010).

It is important to note that earlier immigrants (from European nations), who were able to blend into society with comparatively little governmental regulation, had higher levels of proficiency in the English language as demonstrated by Katz et al (2007). It was their contention that the ability of these immigrants to adapt to their new home without attitudes of alienation from the government and their communities facilitated their learning of the English language through non-contentious interaction with members of the host culture. With subsequent generations, they were better able to remove themselves from lives of poverty through successful integration into the host society (Katz et al, 2007). The literature shows evidence that those immigrant populations who were subject to rigorous governmental regulation and oversight (such as the Hispanic population) achieved lower levels of English proficiency than European immigrants, and socioeconomic mobility was elusive for subsequent generations, also in contrast to Europeans (Katz et al, 2007).

Immigration and Cultural Tensions in Suffolk County, New York

From 1980 to 2000, Suffolk County saw its immigrant population grow more than 72 percent (Center for New Community, 2011). Young people and families raised on Long Island were leaving rapidly in response to the increasing cost of living (CNC, 2011). The white population was aging (CNC, 2011). These conditions, along with an abrupt increase in development of the land and need for a labor force, led to a surge of Latino immigrants coming to Suffolk County. In fact, Hispanics made up 12.6 percent of Suffolk's population by 2005. When increasing numbers of immigrants started coming to stay in Suffolk, in the mid-1990s, they began to replace the younger white people who were leaving the island, with its high housing prices and dearth of high-paying jobs. But that didn't mean that those remaining welcomed them (CNC, 2011).

The Island's ongoing housing shortage meant that accommodating the needs of a rapidly growing population wasn't easy in the first place. The influx of Latinos was seen as a threat to the image of suburbia that residents envisioned when they left urban New York City and established communities on Long Island, per studies conducted by the Center for New Community (2011) and the New York State Immigrant Action Fund (2011). The first response was simply to try and run the immigrants out. When those efforts proved less than fruitful, more drastic measures were taken. This was clearly evident in the small community of Farmingville, where about 1,500 Mexican workers came for work in the late 1990s.

Hostility toward immigrants in Suffolk County dates back at least a decade to the founding of Sachem Quality of Life (SQL), a locally prominent anti-immigrant group whose militant tactics inspired later extremist groups in other communities such as Save

Our State. The organization took its name from the Sachem School district, which was attended by the children of most of the members. Most of those people involved lived in Farmingville, a small hamlet of 15,000 residents that, similar to most of Suffolk County, experienced a significant influx of Latino immigrants beginning in the mid-to-late 1990s (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009).

After its foundation in 1998, SQL began a focused campaign to rid Farmingville of Latino immigrants. These efforts initially included harassment and verbal abuse of workers and contractors at local day-labor pickup sites. SQL disseminated defamatory anti-immigrant propaganda laden with biased and falsified data, which purported to show that these Latino immigrants were responsible for a nonexistent rise in sexual assault, burglary, manslaughter and other area crimes. Members went so far as to petition the United States military to occupy Farmingville; their goal was for soldiers to assist in rounding up immigrants for mass deportation (SPLC, 2009).

The group also worked to subvert the proposed establishment of a day laborer hiring center that was authorized by the Suffolk County Legislature; this authorization was ultimately vetoed by then-County Executive Bob Gaffney. After the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), a powerful and national anti-immigrant hate group based in Washington, D.C., dispatched a field organizer to assist SQL's recruiting, street actions, and propaganda campaign, the SQL saw its membership swell to over 400 members. They began referring to Latino immigrants as "invaders," and declared any American who advocated for immigrant rights was a traitor to the country and should be punished as such (CNC, 2011).

As SQL's influence grew, ethnic tensions increased, as evidenced by the more frequent incidents of verbal harassment and violence. These reports included: rocks and bottles being thrown at Latino immigrants; BB guns being fired at Latinos from rooftops and passing cars; window-breaking, vandalism, and destruction at houses and apartment complexes known to be occupied by immigrants; and Latinos being accosted and confronted on the street by groups of white youths (CNC, 2011).

In September 2000, two local men posed as construction contractors and lured two Mexican day laborers to a warehouse under the premise of employment. There, the white supremacists stabbed the immigrants and nearly beat them to death. Both men were tattooed with Nazi-related symbols and images. Shortly after these attackers were arrested for attempted murder as a hate crime, Paul Tonna, a Republican and presiding officer of the Suffolk County Legislature, helped organize a rally for peace and racial unity in Farmingville, calling for peace between the immigrants and the locals. In response, SQL held a rally outside the legislator’s home, where picketers hurled racial slurs at his adopted children, four of whom are Mexican-American and one a Native American (CNC, 2011).

Two weeks after the attack on the immigrants, SQL held what they called a "Day of Truth" forum. This event featured guest speakers from several hate groups. At the gathering, SQL President Margaret Bianculli-Dyber said that she felt the need to form the group on the day when she claims to have witnessed "hundreds" of Latino men loitering on a corner outside her home. She claimed to have called the police to have the men arrested, and the police acknowledged awareness of the men waiting for work, called her a racist, and refused to respond to her complaint. Also at the “Day of Truth,”

member Dave Drew said the group's ultimate goal was the deportation of all undocumented immigrants.

A few days after this forum, a member of SQL was arrested for threatening a local immigrant family. The targeting of Latinos in Suffolk County has continued ever since the formation of this organization. On July 5, 2003, when SQL was still an active entity, five teenagers used firecrackers to set fire to the home of a family of Mexican immigrants in Farmingville. The house was completely destroyed, and the family barely escaped death. After speaking with the teenagers who set the fire, the district attorney reported that they showed no remorse over burning down the house; their reasoning was simply that Mexicans lived there, and that was reason enough for violence (CNC, 2011).

The Center for New Community was invited to Suffolk County, Long Island in 2001 to begin working with community and religious organizations and leaders in an effort to counter this increasingly vicious anti-immigrant activity, especially that of SQL. While they and other various small and local anti-immigrant groups competed for support and media, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) helped to re-incite the hatred in Suffolk County and laid the groundwork for extreme violence toward Latino immigrants, culminating in death (CNC, 2011).

Newsday reporter Bart Jones had much earlier, described Suffolk County as “ground zero” of the nation’s growing anti-immigrant movement. In the years following his statement, FAIR’s influence in the county was insidious, permeating mainstream politics and policies, and eventually influencing the County Executive himself, who used hate as an opportunity to advance his political agenda and influence. Throughout this

process, the youth of Suffolk County were constantly exposed to the rhetoric and rationale for immigrant bashing from adults who were adept in the practice and prided themselves on their hostility toward this vulnerable population. In 2004, SQL divided into competing factions and then disintegrated (CNC, 2011).

The Murder of Marcelo Lucero

On Nov. 8, 2008, Marcelo Lucero, an Ecuadorian immigrant, was murdered in the town of Patchogue, N.Y., just a short drive from Farmingville. The killing was carried out by a gang of teenagers who named themselves the “Caucasian Crew” and targeted Latino residents for acts of violence as part of a sport they termed "beaner-hopping." This group and its activities were emblematic of a growing national problem, which was hostility and hatred directed at all suspected undocumented Latino immigrants. Officials in Suffolk County minimized the tragedy; the County Executive even suggested that it would have been a small local story if his negative attitude toward immigrants and those of other legislators had not been so well documented over the previous years (SPLC, 2009).

In reality, nativist intolerance and hate directed at Latinos had been festering for years in Suffolk County, deliberately fostered by some of the very same officials who were now minimizing Lucero’s murder and trying to quiet the story. This situation was not unique to Suffolk County; rather it was a microcosm of a problem facing the entire United States. In fact, FBI statistics suggested a 40% rise in anti-Latino hate crimes between 2003 and 2007, the years leading up to the murder. The number of hate groups in America has been growing exponentially as well, increasing by more than

50% since 2000. This growth has occurred primarily through the exploitation of the issue of undocumented non-white immigration, particularly that of Latinos (SPLC, 2012).

A short time after the Lucero murder, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) sent a Spanish-speaking researcher to Suffolk County to interview Latino residents, both documented and undocumented. Their findings cast a light on many issues facing the immigrant communities in the county. While the murder was the worst of the reported attacks on Latinos, as an assault it was far from an isolated incident. It was found that Latino immigrants in Suffolk County were regularly harassed, derided, and pelted with objects hurled from cars. They reported being frequently run off the road while riding bicycles, and many recounted incidents in which they were beaten with baseball bats and other objects. Many others had been shot with BB guns or pepper-sprayed. They were afraid to walk outside after dark and parents would not let their children play outside the house out of fear of them being targeted. Some had been the targets of arson attacks and worse. They were constantly bombarded by the anti-immigrant rhetoric of groups similar to SQL who referred to them as “terrorists” and worked to incite fear of and hostility toward immigrants based on lies and false data (NYSIAF, 2011; SPLC, 2012).

Many of those who were charged with informing and protecting the interests of Suffolk County residents were those exacerbating the situation, such as politicians, community leaders, and law enforcement officials. One county legislator was quoted as saying that, if he saw an influx of Latino day laborers in his town, "we'll be out with baseball bats." Yet another stated that if Latino workers were to gather in his

neighborhood, "I would load my gun and start shooting, period." A third openly issued a warning to undocumented residents that they "better beware. (CNC, 2011)"

County Executive Steve Levy, who was in office at the time of Lucero's murder, was known for his anti-immigrant views. When he was criticized by a group of immigrant advocates, Levy called the organization a den of "Communists" and "anarchists." During his time in office, immigrants told the SPLC that the police were indifferent at best to their reports of harassment, and, at worst, contributed to it. A large number stated that police did not take their reports of attacks seriously, often blaming the victim for the crime. They said they were regularly subjected to racial profiling while driving, as well as enduring illegal searches and seizures. They said they saw no point in going to the police with complaints; the officers would ignore their experiences and instead demand to know their immigration status and see proof of it (NYSIAF, 2011).

Suffolk teens had been openly "Beaner-hopping" for years. In a county whose anti- immigration organizing became a national model for FAIR and other such groups, teenagers had learned well from their elders and the sociopolitical environment: Latinos were dangerous and less than human, and attacking them was acceptable if not encouraged. However, as previously stated, victims of assaults feared coming forward and exposing themselves to police as undocumented. The well-known views of local policymakers and the laws they passed of course, enhanced this fear. Those laws gave official, institutional sanction to the attitude that the undocumented, or any Latino immigrants, weren't welcome in Suffolk County. These laws and attitudes also made the odds of getting caught and convicted for assaulting immigrants seem minimal at best, so the "Spanish" were fair game for violence in Suffolk County (NYSIAF, 2011).

Even in a community where numerous incidents of anti-immigration violence had been reported since the late 1990s, the murder of Marcelo Lucero came as a jolt. It didn't fit with the community's image of itself as a peaceful haven. Residents who had vocally demonized the Latino population were forced to consider that their words and actions may have tangible and harsh consequences; not only was a man dead, but Suffolk County and its underlying prejudices and discriminatory actions were coming to light. Suffolk County was gaining national recognition as a place of implicit segregation and prejudice, where before it had embodied the suburban American dream (CNC, 2011).

Gaps in Contemporary Social Work Knowledge

The bulk of existing literature on female Hispanic immigrants to the United States and issues of acculturation is concerned with public health information and is quantitative in nature. These studies (Jones et al, 2002; Valdes et al, 2006; Wu et al, 2010) focus on measurable outcomes such as poverty, incarceration, health literacy, and infant mortality rates, that serve to reinforce cultural and gender stereotypes and, in many cases, serve to further oppress and marginalize this vulnerable population. Research that was qualitative in nature or sought a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants focused on Latino males, children and adolescents, and families (see Valencia & Johnson, 2008). Latina immigrants, as a group, have not been the subject of adequate in-depth study. This is a significant gap in the literature on a large component of the United States population, numbering in the millions. Their stories need to be understood with depth and richness. As stated by Lopez (2013), "In

the United States of America, one of the wealthiest nations on the earth, the land of opportunity, Hispanic women labor at home and at work to make a better life for themselves and their families. We never hear them complain. We don't see them protesting. They are the silent minority. And it is time their voices were heard" (p. 100).

In this dissertation, I will be utilizing the voices and perceptions of my study participants, who were Latina immigrants, to understand and describe their lived experiences as women adapting to life in a new culture. Those experiences enabled me to construct an expanded theory on how these women acculturated to life in Suffolk County. I will now present a review of existing literature on immigrants and some issues facing them in their host cultures. I will present several existing theories on acculturation, as well as my critique on those dimensions of acculturation for which these theories do not, collectively, account.

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Representative Studies

There are a range of studies that examined and supported the importance of kin networks and stable family support on the successful acculturation of immigrants. Glick et al (1997) found that those emigrating from Latin American nations were primarily forced to do so through illegal channels, as the poverty in the home nations was prohibitive of being able to pay immigration fees. They reported that, generally, those immigrants were able to relocate and settle with the help of a "network" of relatives along the travel route (Glick et al, 1997). Additionally, the practice of multigenerational residence both helped to defray the costs of living in the United States and provided both needed emotional support and links to maintain the original culture.

The conclusions reached by Glick et al (1997) echoed those of earlier researchers such as Keefe (1979) and were supported by subsequent studies, such as that done by Rodriguez et al (2007). Both of these studies explored the cultural norm of multigenerational family living in the Hispanic culture. It is common practice, in many Spanish-speaking countries, for multiple generations of the family to live together. This facilitates division of labor, increases household income, reduces the per-capita cost of living by distributing housing costs across more individuals, and provides a built-in support system for family members. When practiced in the United States, multigenerational living provides similar emotional, social, and economic benefits while also perpetuating traditional cultural practices (Rodriguez at al, 2007).

Choi and Thomas (2009) found that immigrants who felt that they were free to maintain cultural ties and had family support in the host country had more positive

“acculturation attitudes, “ which were predictors of higher rates of successful integration into the American culture. It is notable that, in many of the studies discussed herein, researchers highlight “*familism,”* the common practice of lateral and vertical extended family living together within many of the immigrants’ countries of origin and the connections within this family structure (Glick et al, 1997; Rodriguez et al, 2007). This practice has the effect of not only providing better economic stability and concrete support; it is also an expression of the family’s inherent culture. These studies were done using quantitative methods and numeric scales on acculturation and life satisfaction.

Studies such as that by Torres and Wallace (2013) provide evidence that a primary stressor to many immigrants is related to the legality of their status in the United States (or other host nation). As previously stated, the lengthy and exhaustive procedures to legally immigrate, in combination with the need to satisfy murky eligibility guidelines, has led millions of individuals (USCIS, 2010) to emigrate without the benefit of governmental endorsement. At this time, the vast majority of those relocating illegally to the United States originate from Latin American nations (USCIS, 2010). Being considered an “illegal immigrant” carries implicit stigma, stress, and uncertainty, including the ever-present threat of deportation (Torres & Wallace, 2013). The recognition that one is always a ‘‘deportable subject’’ can result in the individual displaying a certain set of behaviors when interacting with the host society, such as avoidance, fear, hostility, and submissiveness (Torres & Wallace, 2013). These behaviors can thereby affect specific choices involving activism, political identification, and integration within the community. As such, an undocumented immigrant may

consider him or herself to be unaffiliated with any specific state or institution, but is also, per Torres and Wallace (2013), inherently devoid of the resources and protections that those institutions may offer, such as health insurance, housing assistance, and educational services.

Related to that disconnect between the individual and the host culture is the work of Portes and Rivas (2011). They conducted a comparative analysis of immigrant families from Pan-Asian nations and similar families from Latin American nations. They found that those from Asia came from a foundation of relative socioeconomic stability, were able to emigrate legally, and had "white-collar," well paid jobs. These families were positively received in America and the children and adolescents had positive outcomes and integrated well into the new culture (Portes & Rivas, 2011). Conversely, the majority of the Latino families came from impoverished backgrounds and many emigrated illegally due to financial constraints. Their perception was that they were not welcomed or accepted as part of American society, and the tendency was for the adults to work at low-wage jobs and live in poor neighborhoods without good school systems. Accordingly, the children of the Latino immigrants tended to have negative outcomes and adapt poorly to the new culture (Portes & Rivas, 2011).

Peasant Classes, Family Structure, and Patriarchy

In his *Critical Theory of the Family*, Poster (1979) discusses the traditional family structures found in agricultural peasant classes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, but he asserts that those trends were commonly seen in other cultures and are echoed in some cultural traditional norms and practices in

contemporary North American culture and society among comparable immigrant communities. Parenting roles and authority in agricultural peasant villages were diffused throughout the community, and many of those implicitly charged with guiding the lives of the children were not members of the nuclear family. As an individual's life "outcomes" were seen as being ultimately determined by fate and the will of God, members of these communities tended to externalize locus of control over their lives. Similarly, as people did not consider themselves autonomous beings, there was acceptance of outside input into family relationships, including arranged marriages. Children, particularly females, were not given the opportunity to develop strong egos and were raised to live their lives according to the needs and rhythms of the village, with its deeply ingrained traditions, values, and customs (Poster, 1979). This facilitated the adherence to patriarchal social structures that restricted the choices of women, and is echoed in contemporary immigrant communities composed of families rooted in these cultural norms.

Health Outcomes and Acculturation

Jones et al (2002) conducted a quantitative study with Hispanic women receiving treatment at a prenatal clinic in a low-income geographic area of Texas. Their goal was to study and analyze the impact that access to health insurance has on preventive reproductive health care, and used this access to health care as an indicator of successful acculturation. The researchers identified variables recognized as related to access such as low level of education, low occupational standing, and low income. They cite it as "common knowledge" that among Hispanic population groups, Mexican

American women have lower education and income and have less access to prevention services (Jones et al, 2002).

They examined the additional variable of pay category of the patient and the relationship to patterns of compliance with family planning visits in the first year post-birth in a sample of 397 low-income Hispanic women. Their justification for the importance of their study is that “acculturation and the relationship to access to and outcomes of health care are relevant issues in caring for immigrant women and their children, particularly because they are tomorrow’s U.S. workforce” (p.130).

Jones et al (2002) state that a lack of adequate health insurance and vulnerable economic status are important reasons why a significant number of women do not receive needed care. Women of color are more likely to be poor, uninsured, and to lack needed medical care than white women. Hispanic women make up a disproportionate share of the uninsured and have a similarly lower rate of access to common preventive health services in a given year compared with white and African American women. According to the authors, barriers to early entry into prenatal care are related to marital status, education, and income. Single (unmarried or unpartnered) women with less than a ninth-grade education living in an urban setting with monthly income less than $1,000 were found to be at risk for late entry into prenatal care. Related variables included initially not wanting the pregnancy and ability to read only in Spanish. They additionally referred to prior research on pregnancy at a young age, ignorance of contraceptive methods, and interactions of acculturative level and “correct” use of contraception.

Jones et al (2002) conducted their study by gaining access to the aforementioned prenatal clinic in Texas. The researchers looked at the patient sign-in

list and identified those patients present with “Hispanic surnames,” and then approached those women to be included in the survey. Brief demographic interviews were conducted and then survey instruments measuring “Mexican and Mexican-American Acculturation” were utilized with the assistance of a bilingual research assistant.

A similar study was conducted by Leybas-Amedia et al (2005), as well as by Roncancio et al (2011). Both used quantitative methods to measure health care utilization against acculturative levels (categories describing the extent to which the participants had adapted to the host culture) for Mexican-born women living in Arizona. Leybas-Amedia et al (2005) were proactive and exhibited some level of cultural competency in engaging bilingual community health workers. The survey questions were focused on issues of poverty, illness, reproduction and sexual history, and utilization of preventive screening. There was no mention of any variables other than income level, education level, or access to health insurance that may impact utilization of wellness services; their focus was on concrete barriers to this utilization.

Latino Youth, Drug Use, and Familial Acculturation

Valencia and Johnson (2008) conducted a study on Latino immigrant youth and drug use. Their findings suggested that, faced with attitudes of discrimination by peers within the dominant group, immigrant adolescents had a tendency to overcompensate in assimilation by virtually abandoning their cultural norms and morals. This indicated that they distanced themselves from their parents and the values imparted to them by older generation of their families, in particular their mothers. The majority, due to limited work

opportunities and low income, lived in areas characterized by poverty and crime. There was a startling trend for these youth to not only use drugs with their “American” counterparts, but also to join gangs and engage in related activity in order to fit in and be accepted by the dominant subculture. Similar outcomes were found by Smokowski et al (2008), who also concluded that American-born children of undocumented parents were at comparable risk and, in fact, were often willing to be alienated from their families (particularly parents or other caretakers) in order to assimilate to the “new” culture (Smokowski et al, 2008). This posed additional acculturative stress to Latina women as they struggled with both their own acculturation and that of their children.

Additional studies supporting the trend of family alienation, family stress, and generational gaps were conducted by Chao and Otsuki-Clutter (2011) and Smokowski et al (2008), both of which describe bicultural confusion and conflict related to differing levels of, and prioritizing of, acculturation. In both studies, these factors corresponded to varying levels of cohesiveness and alienation between immigrant generations, often resulting in maladaptive behaviors by the younger generations in their efforts to fully assimilate to the host culture. So, while this was a qualitative, in-depth study, it was focused only on youth and adolescents engaging in deviant behavior.

One of the very few qualitative studies found was conducted by Crandall et al (2005). The researchers sought to explore the life experiences of Latin-American women who identified as survivors of domestic violence. They used focus groups and semi-structured interviews to explore the abuse suffered by these women, the impact on them and their families, and concrete services and supports utilized in the recovery process. The researchers utilized methodology indicative of high levels of cultural

competency, but their sample was not composed exclusively of foreign-born participants. Additionally, their interviews were meant to elicit graphic descriptions of abuse and barriers to recovery. They identified and discussed, as previously mentioned, concrete resources and supports such as therapeutic groups and mental health treatment.

Having outlined a sampling of the existing literature on immigrants and acculturation, I will now present accepted theories on acculturation and a brief critique of those theories.

THEORIES ON ACCULTURATION

To begin discussion of theories on acculturation, it is vital to first emphasize the difference between *assimilation* and *acculturation*. Assimilation makes the assumption that the "goal" of the individual and the collective community of immigrants and their descendants is increasing absorption of the host culture until they no longer maintain any cultural norms and traditions. In contrast, acculturation is the process by which the individual (and community of immigrants) and the host culture evolve in relation to each other. It cannot be assumed that when an individual emigrates to a new culture, he or she does so with the goal of all aspects of the home culture fading away through generations.

Berry's Acculturative Model (BAM)

One of the most prominent scholars of acculturation theory is John W. Berry, who developed a widely-used framework for examining the process of adapting to a new culture. Berry's model has been utilized by many researchers (Mana & Orr, 2008; Hernandez, 2009; Sakamoto, 2007; Skuza, 2007) on the basis of its clear and concrete typologies of acculturative outcomes. At the heart of acculturation theory is the very basic question: What happens to individuals, who have developed in one cultural context, when they attempt to live in a new cultural context? With culture assumed as a powerful influence on behavior, do individuals continue to act in the new setting as they did in the previous one, do they change their behavior, expectations and beliefs to be more appropriate in the new setting, or is there some complex compromise of stability and change in how people go about their lives in the new society (Berry, 1997)?

The classical definition of acculturation was presented by Berry thusly: "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (p.7). In principle, acculturation is a neutral and bidirectional term, meaning that change may take place in either or both groups. In practice and experience, however, acculturation tends to induce more change in one of the groups (the acculturating group) than in the other (Berry, 1997).

In all diverse societies, cultural groups and their members (both the dominant and non-dominant) must deal with the issue of how to acculturate. Strategies for acculturations are generally worked out in the course of social interaction between

individuals and groups. Two major issues of acculturation are cultural maintenance (to what extent is cultural identity considered to be important, and its maintenance strived for) and contact and participation (to what extent should the immigrants become involved with the dominant or other cultures, or remain primarily among themselves). Hsiao and Witting (2008), as well as Sapienza et al (2010), stress the importance of recognizing that acculturation is a bidirectional process, with adjustment on the part of both the dominant and non-dominant parties. Similarly, Geschke et al (2010) expound on the concept that that the acculturative goals of the majority (host) culture are just as important as those of the incoming immigrants as predictors of acculturative success; behaviors and attitudes welcoming of diversity tend to correspond to positive outcomes, and the opposite is true for negative outcomes such as hostility and discriminatory attitudes.

Berry (1997) identifies four acculturation strategies. From the point of view of the non-dominant (immigrant) group, the *assimilation* strategy is defined when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures in order to adopt the new cultural norms. In contrast, when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time aim to avoid interaction with other cultures, then the *separation* strategy is implemented. When there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture, while in regular interactions with other groups, *integration* is the strategy utilized wherein there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the larger social network. Finally, when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (quite often for reasons of enforced cultural loss or deliberate alienation

from the culture of origin), and little interest in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination) then *marginalization* is occurring. Assimilation must be differentiated from acculturation, as they are often mistakenly used interchangeably. Assimilation assumes that only the immigrant changes, not the host culture, and that the goal is complete abandonment of ingrained cultural norms and values in favor of those of the host culture (Berry, 1997).

The delineation between acculturation strategies was based on the assumption that non-dominant groups and their individual members have the freedom to choose their level of acculturation. This, of course, is not always the case. When the dominant group enforces certain forms of acculturation, or constrains the choices of the non-dominant entities, then other terms need to be used. The *separation* strategy is most often employed, but when it is required by the dominant society, the situation is one of *segregation*. Similarly, when people choose to assimilate, the term "*the Melting Pot*" is appropriate; but when forced to assimilate, it becomes more like a *Pressure Cooker*. According to Berry (1997), people rarely choose to be marginalized; rather marginalization most often occurs as a result of attempts at forced assimilation (Pressure Cooker) combined with forced exclusion (segregation). When utilizing acculturation theory in this context to examine immigration, it is evident that forcing individuals to forsake and abandon ingrained cultural norms, while simultaneously preventing them from inclusion in their new society (through social or institutional controls), can and often does result in immigrants being marginalized.

Berry (1997) states that integration can only be "freely" chosen and truly attained by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its

orientation towards cultural diversity. This is a key to the immigration debate: the fostering of mistrust and fear toward incoming immigrant populations, particularly those who appear genetically “different” from the dominant white American society, prevents the host community from being open to accepting and embracing its new members. This translates both to societal exclusion and, at the macro level, policies meant to inhibit the ability of immigrants to successfully acculturate (live comfortably within) to the dominant culture. Thus, a mutual accommodation is required for integration to be attained, which involves the acceptance by both groups of the right of all groups to live in a culturally different manner without being made to feel shame or resentment toward the culture of origin (Skuza, 2007).

The strategy of mutual accommodation requires the non-dominant group to adopt the basic values of the larger society. However, the dominant group must, at the same time, be prepared to adapt national institutions (such as education, welfare, and health) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the diverse society.

The strategy of integration as described can only be pursued in societies that are explicitly multicultural, in which certain conditions exist. These conditions are the widespread acceptance of the value to a society of cultural diversity; relatively low levels of prejudice; positive mutual attitudes among cultural groups (no specific intergroup hatreds); and a sense of attachment to, and identification with, the larger society (the collective host culture as altered by all incoming traditions, norms, and values) by all groups. There must, in short, be a collective commitment to the existence of a truly diverse society in which all subcultures are equally recognized, accepted, and valued. It is evident that integration (and separation) can only be sought when other members of

one’s ethnocultural group share in the wish to maintain the group’s cultural heritage. In this sense, these two strategies (integration and separation) are “collective’,’ whereas assimilation is more “individualistic.” It must, however, be noted that those whose physical features set them apart from the society of settlement may experience prejudice and discrimination, and thus be reluctant to pursue assimilation for fear of rejection and personal harm (Berry, 1997; Hernandez, 2009).

Particularly relevant to the discussion at hand is Berry’s (1997) assertion that government policies and programs (local and national) may also be examined in the context of these four approaches. Some, such as the Dawes Act of 1887 (which pressured Native Americans to become ranchers and farmers), are clearly assimilationist, expecting all immigrant and ethnocultural groups to become like those in the dominant society; others, such as the DREAM Act, which would facilitate college education for immigrant youth, are integrationist, willing or even pleased to accept and incorporate all groups on their own cultural terms. Others have pursued segregationist policies and yet others have sought the marginalization of unwanted groups, such as Jim Crow laws meant to segregate blacks and impede voting rights. The current policies of the United States government would appear to be a hybrid of all but the integrationist strategies; they reinforce the need for conformation to “American” values and beliefs, as well as norms such as language and symbolic tools (Markovitsky and Mosek, 2005). These polices (implicit and explicit) are punitive towards those who try to maximize retention of their own cultures and, thus, influence formal and informal social structures to marginalize and behave prejudicially toward non-dominant, non-conforming cultural groups and individuals (Markovitsky and Mosek, 2005).

Berry (1997) further identifies additional variations in acculturation of the non-dominant (immigrant) group. First, there is usually a conscious preference for one particular strategy. However, there is a possibility for variation according to one's location: in more private domains (such as the home, extended family, or ethnic community) more maintenance of the original culture may be sought (and viewed favorably) than in more public spheres (such as the workplace or in politics). There may be less contact sought with the dominant cultural group in private spheres than in the more public ones.

Second, the broader national and political context may affect acculturation strategies. For example, in explicitly diverse societies individuals may seek to match welcoming policies facilitating successful interaction with a personal preference for integration. This indicates that immigrants entering a host culture that is welcoming of diversity may be more likely to integrate traditional cultural norms of the culture of origin with those of the host culture and, in essence, live their lives according to a hybrid of the two cultures. Conversely, in assimilationist societies, acculturation may be easiest by adopting an assimilation strategy for oneself and deferring the importance of maintaining the culture of origin. That is, individuals may be constrained by societal expectations and outlook on diversity in their choice of strategy, even to the point where there is a very limited role for personal preference in acculturation strategy. When personal preferences for degree of cultural integration are in conflict with national policies, stress is often the result. Third, evidence has shown that during the course of development, and over the period of primary acculturation, individuals tend to explore

various strategies, eventually settling on one that is more useful or appropriate to circumstances than the others.

Berry (1997) puts forth the assumption that individuals begin the acculturation process with a number of personal characteristics (demographic and socially constructed). In particular, one's age and developmental stage (a concept rooted in psychological theory) are known to have relationships to the trajectory of acculturation. When acculturation starts early (prior to entry to school) the process is generally smooth. The reasons for this are unclear; some think that perhaps full absorption into one's parents' culture is not sufficiently advanced to require much shedding of the original culture or conflict between the "new" and "old" cultures; or perhaps emotional and psychological adaptability are optimal during the early years of life (Mana & Orr, 2008).

However, according to Mana and Orr (2008), older youth and adolescents do often experience substantial problems. It is thought that perhaps that conflict between demands of family and peers are at their height at this life stage, or that the complications of transitioning between childhood and adulthood are compounded by these cultural transitions. It is further theorized that developmental issues of identity become evident at this time and interact with questions of ethnic identity, which multiplies the inherent confusion and conflict about who one really is (Mana & Orr, 2008).

If the process of acculturation is initiated in later life (upon retirement or when older parents migrate to join their adult offspring in the host culture) there appears to be increased risk of poor adaptation to the new culture. It is possible that the same factors

of duration of exposure and adaptability (as suggested for children) are also a factor here: a whole life lived in one cultural setting cannot easily be forgotten or abandoned when one is adapting to life in a new setting (Mana & Orr, 2008).

Education is presented as a consistent factor associated with positive adaptations: higher education is predictive of lower acculturation stress. Several rationales have been suggested for this relationship. First, education is a resource in itself: the ability to analyze and solve problems is generally instilled through formal education and is likely to contribute to better adaptation. Second, education tends to correlate positively to other resources such as income, occupational status, support networks etc.; all of these are themselves factors indicative of positive acculturative outcomes. Third, for many migrants, education may make them aware of the characteristics and social conditions of the society into which they settle; it may facilitate a sort of “pre-acculturation” to the language, values, and norms of the new culture (Berry, 1997).

Closely related to education is one's economic status. Although high status (like education) is a component of human capital, it is common for migrants to experience a sometimes debilitating combination of status loss and limited status mobility upon entry to the new nation and culture (Berry, 1997). It is frequently seen that one's "departure status" is higher than one's "entry status"; credentials such as educational and work experience are frequently devalued on arrival. This may on occasion be due to real differences in qualifications, but it may also be due to ignorance and/or prejudice in the host society; the host culture may not place the same value on skill mastery that was seen in the country of origin. In any case, this phenomenon leads to status loss and the

risk of additional stress. Upon this occurrence, the usual main goal of relocation (upward status mobility) is thwarted, which can contribute to psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem (Berry, 1997). Thus, these problems derive from personal characteristics brought to the acculturation process, but they also have root in the interaction between the immigrant and the formal and informal structures of the society of settlement.   Therefore, problems of status loss and limited mobility can usually be addressed during the course of acculturation if positive interactions can be achieved, in which the human and social capital attained in the country of origin are similarly accepted and valued in the host culture (Berry, 1997).

Cohen's Three-Fold Model of Acculturation

Cohen (2010) suggests an expansion of Berry's model that accounts for the community of co-migrants as a factor in acculturative strategy and success. He also addresses the multidimensional and dynamic interaction between the immigrant, the community of co-migrants, the "home culture," and the new country to which the individual or family is attempting to acculturate. Cohen's (2010) typology represents positive or negative attitudes toward each referent, delineating eight possible strategies for acculturation, and does so primarily in the context of the immigrant as part of a larger social unit of migrants. Van Hook and Glick's (2007) work on acculturation and family structure supports the need to include each of these referents as factors contributing to the overall acculturative experience and success. They define acculturative success as the ability to adapt to the host culture and new social environment to a degree that

minimizes life stress related to and conflict with the host culture (Van Hook & Glick, 2007).

Cohen (2010) describes the important ways in which the immigrant community in the new country community differs from similar communities in the country of origin. First, those who decide to migrate may have differed in significant ways prior to departure from their co-nationals who stay behind. They may have been members of a particular minority cultural group in their home country. When members of minority groups migrate, their ‘‘home culture’’ includes both elements of the larger society of the country of their birth and elements of their specific minority culture.

Second, the collective experience of migration and the subsequent group acculturation impact the overall culture of the community of migrants, so that it is no longer parallel to the original home society. The immigrant community, in addition to the culture of origin, shares the experience of migration and the blend of values and behavior they adopt in the process of acculturation. Additionally, the new community of co-migrants may include people from different countries who are clustered in the host society, thus changing the entire nature of the community after migration.

Third, the process of acculturation becomes more complex as the culture of the host country evolves and changes. This occurs both as an inherent process of its own dynamics and as a response to mass migration and the impact of new cultures, ideas, and values. Finally, the home culture is also not static. Just as the culture of the host country changes, so too does that of the home country. Over time, the remembered elements of the home culture preserved by the immigrants may not actually resemble that culture as it comes to be practiced in the nation of origin. Thus, upon returning for

visits, particularly after long absences, migrants often find that the fondly remembered culture and traditions that they have perpetuated in their new home no longer exist (Cohen, 2010).

After setting forth these assertions, Cohen (2010) delineates his model with eight acculturation strategies, labeled Type A through Type H. All involve a combination of positive and negative attitudes toward the three identified referents. Type A, *group integration,* refers to migrants with positive attitudes towards all three referents. This indicates migrants whose acculturation strategy includes integrating into the host culture yet maintaining strong links with aspects of both their own culture and with a community of those who share both the home culture and the migration and acculturation experience to the new nation. This strategy is easiest to adopt when the home and host societies are relatively similar, when migration results from conscious choice rather than necessity, and when the host society is open to immigration and diversity.

Type B, *group nostalgic insulation,* refers to immigrants with negative attitudes towards the culture of the host country, maintain a preference for the home culture, and have a positive relationship with their community of co-migrants. Such individuals may live in a community of fellow migrants without integrating to any great degree into the new culture, or may even have a negative relationship with members of the new culture. This type of attitude is commonly seen among first generation immigrants, particularly those who migrated for economic or security reasons rather than a preference for the host country.

Type C*, individual integration*, refers to those who maintain favorable attitudes towards both the home and host cultures, but negative attitudes towards the community

of co-migrants. For example, an immigrant from an elite class may intentionally distance himself or herself from a local migrant community composed primarily of those with lower socioeconomic status, and yet retain nostalgic and symbolic ties to the home culture.

Type D, *individual nostalgic separation*, refers to immigrants who possess positive attitudes towards their home culture and negative attitudes towards both the host culture and the co-migrant community. This sometimes occurs in situations where conditions within the migrant community are unpleasant or dangerous, with the migrants often isolated from the dominant society. Historically, this was seen in cases of wartime migration where heterogeneous and temporary housing conditions (such as refugee camps) promoted attitudes of mutual suspicion and paranoia.

Type E, *group acculturation*, refers to migrants who prefer the culture of the host country to the home country, but also have positive attitudes toward co-migrants. The positive attitude towards the community of co-migrants distinguishes group acculturation from *assimilation* in the Berry (1997) model. Field studies of immigrant communities showed that, while the immigrants held negative views of the countries left behind, they experienced a feeling of affiliation with an international community of fellow co-migrants.

Type F, *group insulation*, refers to immigrants who have positive attitudes towards their fellow immigrants, but negative attitudes towards both the culture of the home country and that of the host country. This can occur among a minority who rejected (and experienced rejection by) the country of origin, and yet has no desire to replace their own culture with that of the host country. If the community of co-migrants is

large enough, they may be able to establish their own unique sub-culture within the host country, which can be passed on to successive generations.

Type G, *assimilation*, refers to immigrants with negative attitudes towards their country of origin as well as the community of co-migrants, with positive attitudes only towards the culture of the host country. This type of immigrant intentionally distances himself or herself from the community of co-migrants and strives to fully assimilate into the host society. Examples include immigrants who marry into the host culture, adopt their spouse's culture, reject their home culture, and sever ties with the community of migrants from their home country.

Type H, *marginalization*, refers to immigrants with negative attitudes towards the country of origin, the host country and the community of co-migrants. This person is considered socially marginalized. Cases of social marginalization would be of particular interest to social workers dealing with populations at risk, such as child refugees and those seeking political asylum. However, this typology also refers to immigrants who opt for an individualistic and universal type of identity, removed from any particular ethnic or national identity. These individuals may consider themselves "their own culture." This presents an example of marginalization in a positive light by the assumption of an individualistic identity, in that the immigrant, by choice, lives on the fringe of mainstream culture and chooses his or her own identity separate from clear cultural identification. This interpretation of marginalization indicates a high level of autonomy and empowerment.

Miller et al (2009) utilized Cohen's framework in their study on Soviet-born women immigrating to the United States. They bring forth the fact that a very common

pattern of immigrant residential evolution is initial settlement in an urban ethnic enclave ‘‘gateway’’ community. This is usually a lower income neighborhood where large numbers of people from the same ethnic background reside. The authors examined the experiences of the participants and asked whether they self-assess their levels of acculturation in the context of cultural retention, alienation from their original cultures, and adoption of "American" ways. A conclusion reached by the authors was that much of the acculturation experience and ability to integrate successfully was dependent on the acculturation goals of the participants (Miller et al, 2009).

Social and Acculturative Stress

Also relevant in the exploration of theories on acculturation is the discussion of stress in social and acculturative processes. Cervantes and Cordova (2011), in their work on the experiences of Hispanic youth, consider the stress inherent in immigration and the dynamic process of adaptation. It is, of course, evident that exposure to stressful life events has adverse effects on both the psychological and the physical well-being of individuals and families. Social Stress theory explains that social organization and the nature of social interactions possess significant roles in the origins and outcomes of stressful life experiences (Cervantes & Cordova, 2011).

In addition, and most relevant to the case of immigration, social stress theory asserts that disenfranchised populations often experience increased stress because of the inequalities found in the social organization in which the individual or family is now enmeshed (Cervantes & Cordova, 2011). This is particularly relevant for ethnic minority groups, such as immigrants, because of the significant and well documented health

disparities and structural exclusion experienced by this portion of the population. Stressful experiences very often cause negative emotional and physiological reactions that impact overall well being. Numerous scholars (Chae & Foley, 2010; Geschke, 2010; Tseng & Yoshikowa, 2008) contend that racial and ethnic discrimination is a critical life event and a major source of stress in the environment for ethnic minorities in the United States due to their relative powerlessness (Cervantes & Cordova, 2011). In national surveys, racial and ethnic discrimination has been reported as a major social stressor for Latinos. In addition to “normal” stress that most adolescents face, Hispanic and other minority adolescents also confront additional stressors related to minority status such as discrimination, increased poverty rates, cultural and language barriers, and immigration challenges (Cervantes & Cordova, 2011).

Chae and Foley (2010) suggest that cultural changes, including traumatic events, create acculturation stress that affects immigrant populations, and it is hypothesized that acculturation changes are an important predictor for mental health problems in both adults and children. Individuals and families from one cultural foundation constantly being exposed to new and challenging events and situations require ongoing psychological and behavioral adjustments (Chae and Foley, 2010). Bonizzoni (2009) draws attention to the stress related to immigration and the separation and subsequent reunification of families. Italian immigrants in her study reunited after more than a decade of family separation evidenced feelings of being re-traumatized, with accompanying clinical symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Bonizzoni, 2009). Some stressors have been related to the social environment and, specifically, the exposure to racial and ethnic discrimination constitutes a source of daily stress. This

type of stressful event is primarily based on one's minority status membership (Chae & Foley, 2010).

Further, stressors associated with discrimination exposure have been found to be traumatizing and related to the development of posttraumatic stress disorder, which can be inhibitory of the ability to acculturate on an ongoing basis; psychological trauma can halt the process altogether and push immigrants toward less "healthy" strategies of acculturation. Cervantes and Cordova (2011), like Bonizzoni (2009), call attention to the trauma of family separation through immigration; adolescents in that study consistently spoke of the sadness they felt in leaving parents, grandparents, and siblings behind. They expressed feelings of grief, loss, and insecurity, and that the lack of that support in the new country made it more difficult for them to deal with the discrimination and prejudice they experienced after relocation. This study, like many others, did not account for the feelings of the children's adult counterparts also experiencing this separation and resulting emotional reactions. That said, it was determined by Acevedo (2000) that the level of successful acculturation was positively related to the tendency of immigrants to seek professional help in times of emotional upheaval or crisis, such as in cases of domestic violence.

Flexible Acculturation Theory

Lee (2008) proposes the concept of *flexible acculturation* as an alternative to more "traditional" theories of acculturation. This framework differs from Berry's (1997) and Cohen's (2010) theories by sheer virtue of its abandonment of static "labels" for strategies of acculturation. Flexible acculturation theory indicates sets of processes

constantly changing, if even in minute increments, the relationship of the immigrant to all other social structures and groups.

Despite its relative ambiguity and lack of clear conceptualization, I have chosen to include flexible acculturation in this analysis because, unlike the other two models presented, it takes into account the relationship between immigrants and the government. Lee (2008) states that flexible acculturation comprises a set of highly complex processes that can be predicted based on institutional influences from the intersection between the local, the national, the international, the transnational, and the global “social actors.” Indeed, flexible acculturation recognizes any social actors, from above (capitalists, governments), from below (workers, social movements), or from any other rung of the social or socioeconomic ladder. What this accounts for, in short, is that the multidirectional process of acculturation, as defined by Berry and Cohen, is in many ways limited or otherwise impacted by the implicit and explicit attitude of those in power toward immigrants. If government policies are hostile toward immigrants and limit their choices in acculturative strategies, that will likely impact the overall interaction between these immigrants and their multidimensional environment. Of high importance is Lee’s conceptualization of acculturation as a fluid process, which is seen as ever-changing based upon internal and external factors (Lee, 2008).

Engstrom and Okamura (2007) found that immigrants and refugees often have the experience that their interactions with bureaucratic social institutions take the form of cultural collisions rather than cooperation. Findings from their study provide evidence that institutions, such as government agencies, school systems, and social welfare organizations, assume that clients have a general capacity to communicate effectively

and accurately in English. Institutions also assume that clients understand the purpose of programs and services, as well as the laws and regulations that govern their operation, eligibility, and limitations (Engstrom & Okamura, 2007).

Further, institutions assume that clients will know how to access information about services, such as possessing the ability to negotiate the omnipresent technological advances such as automated telephone directories and Web-based information. Additionally, institutions assume that clients understand and share basic assumptions about service delivery, such as appointments and waiting lists. Institutions assume that clients have already become sufficiently attuned to their new society as to know their roles and the roles and boundaries of service providers (Engtrom & Okamura, 2007).

Finally, institutions assume that clients know their rights and have the capacity to protect their interests by using appeal processes and other due-process procedures. The reality is that, as evidenced in McNutt et al (2011), immigrants from most developing nations have little or no awareness of institutional practices and, in fact, suffer from what they term “information poverty,” which inhibits participation in the global economy.

Sakamoto et al (2008) examined a series of changes in Canada at the institutional level aimed at integrating skilled immigrants into Canadian society. They utilized Berry’s framework and concluded that, by adopting official multicultural policies, Canada was able to successfully integrate these individuals (and their families) more efficiently than might have been possible without advocacy and legislative support. There were still difficulties adjusting to the new culture and accessing employment, but

acculturative stress was much reduced compared to immigrants to the United States from the same nations of origin (Sakamoto et al, 2008).

Linear Assimilation Theory

The theory of Linear Assimilation (sometimes called the Three Generations Theory) refers to the generational relationship between immigrants and their level of assimilation to the host culture. The theory states that subsequent generations of individuals removed from the first-generation, or newly arrived, immigrants have less in common with the culture of their ancestors and more in common with the culture of the "host" nation, which is in actuality their nation of origin. In addition, the assumption is made that socioeconomic status improves with each subsequent generation. Linear Assimilation is most concerned with: language, foods, celebrations, family structure, and community structure (Brown et al, 2006; Gratton et al, 2007).

The first-generation immigrant tends to retain the vast majority of the norms, values, and traditions of the home culture, including language, foods, celebrations, and family structure. They tend to live in geographic enclaves of families and individuals with similar ethnic origins and utilize businesses and services that cater to their ethnic group.

The second-generation is composed of the children of the first-generation immigrants. They tend to be more "bicultural," meaning that they tend to blend selected traditions, norms, and values of their parents' culture with selected traits of the "host" culture (into which they were born) and often identify themselves as belonging to both

cultures. Most often, they will retain the language of their parents' culture and be raised with traditional foods and celebrations.

The third generation is composed of the grandchildren of the first-generation immigrants; these are the children of the second generation. According to linear assimilation theory, these individuals will retain very little of their grandparents' cultural norms and will relate almost exclusively to the culture of their nation of birth. Most often, they will not speak the language of their grandparents or maintain traditional practices. The third generation (and subsequent generations) will most often identify themselves exclusively as part of their culture of birth (the host culture) and will relate very little to the culture of their ancestors.

A Brief Critique of Existing Acculturation Theories

The lack of overt acknowledgement of institutional influence is, I believe, one of the primary shortcomings of the traditional (BAM, Cohen, Linear Assimilation) models of acculturation, a sentiment also expressed by Morrison and James (2009), who point out a definitive lack of agreement on the components and players involved in the acculturative process. The consideration of the role of government in acculturation in Lee's work is the reason for its inclusion in this literature review. The traditional models rely on very concrete typologies of acculturative outcome, with little regard for dynamic, fluid process; acculturation is portrayed as too static of a process. Conversely, Lee's model makes allowances for continual change in acculturative "status," but is lacking in clear conceptualization of any potential outcomes. Linear Assimilation Theory does not account for legal status, gender norms and roles, spirituality, age upon emigration,

acculturation/assimilation goals of the individual, economic status (in home culture and host culture), education, openness to diversity (hostility, prejudice, discrimination experiences), level of civic interest and engagement, and policy implications, such as barriers to attaining legal presence, that might limit the interaction of immigrants with the host culture.

Additionally, there is little agreement on standard instruments for quantitative studies of acculturation, rendering empirical measurement difficult if not impossible (Kimbro, 2009). Thus many researchers resort to using measures of certain characteristics or statistics stereotypically related to minority groups, such as language ability, infant mortality rates, and health care utilization (Zambrana and Carter-Pokras, 2010; Cort, 2010). Also notable is the apparent disregard of internal (intangible) resources of human beings, such as strengths, resourcefulness, and resiliency; these are core concepts central to the principles of social welfare and the relief of oppression.

Having explored existing literature on acculturation and immigrant experiences, as well as accepted theories of acculturation, I will, in the next chapter, describe the methodology I utilized to conduct my study.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative, naturalistic inquiry utilizing grounded theory in order to understand the lived experiences of Latina immigrants in Suffolk County, New York. The purpose of the study is to understand of the process by and the degree to which the participants and the host culture successfully or unsuccessfully acculturated to each other. This purpose determined the chosen methodology, which allowed for the development of a model grounded in the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants.

Why Qualitative Research?

Qualitative research, like quantitative, is empirical in nature. In qualitative research, the researchers explore deep meaning as understood by the participants. The qualitative researchers also seek understanding of the phenomenon or process as shaped by the meanings people bring to them by employing different methods such as interview, case study, and observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Rather than utilizing numbers and statistical analysis to arrive at findings, qualitative researchers use the experiences of relevant persons and the content of social artifacts, represented and organized through language and communicated by words. In a qualitative study, the interpretations of the participants are captured based on the participants' perceptions and understanding of their lived experiences. The researcher is most concerned about the perceived meaning (according to the participants) rather than the actual meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

In qualitative research, the researchers believe in the existence of multiple truths. According to Creswell (2007), participants' understanding, values, beliefs, reasons, and subjective beliefs all contribute to the synthesis of knowledge. This process of knowledge construction is the focus, rather than focusing on the content of the knowledge itself. The beliefs that underlie the paradigm of qualitative research suggest that inductive reasoning and the understanding and acknowledgement of multiple realities is critical. Qualitative researchers examine social and cultural phenomena in order to construct meaning from the perspective of the research participants. Therefore, knowledge generation in this research paradigm is by nature open-ended. Qualitative researchers also follow inductive reasoning as they deal with small participant samples compared to quantitative studies (Cresswell, 2007).

A researcher chooses to use qualitative research for his or her work when a research topic needs to be examined and comprehended at a complex and detailed level. To this end, researchers try to minimize the power relationship between the researcher and participants by empowering those participants to share their stories and to have their previously silent voices heard. This was appropriate for my study as Latina immigrants are a vulnerable population and have, to this point, been relatively disregarded as a source of such detailed experiential knowledge. Additionally, qualitative design is appropriate to utilize when such sensitive issues as gender differences, race, and economic status are a matter of concern or focus, as they were in the community being examined in this study. Qualitative design may also be the preferred research method chosen when inadequate theories exist, and the possibility

exists that a new theory can be developed as the result of the research (Tavallaei & Abu Talib, 2010).

Fassinger and Morrow (2013) state that qualitative research approaches can help to enhance the relationship and dialogue between researchers and participants in their communities; minimize the imposition of researcher assumption; serve to empower participants by helping them to voice their stories and by honoring their strengths; needs, and values; stimulate collaborative efforts toward social change by researchers and participants; and act as a catalyst for theory development. Qualitative methods also facilitate dissemination of research outcomes in ways that are immediately useful to communities and other invested entities.

Grounded Theory

The inductive method is the basis of grounded theory methodology. Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that grounded theory is derived from data, examples of which are then used to illustrate and demonstrate the applicability of that theory. The foundational assumption of grounded theory is that we, as researchers, do not know all there is to know about a phenomenon, and that theoretical understanding of this phenomenon may best be reached by remaining “grounded” in the spoken words and lived experiences of the participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This permits them to describe their experiences rather than the researcher trying to predict or fit those experiences into an already existing model, which may be inadequate to explain the phenomena under study. In short, grounded theory focuses on human interaction and social processes to

explain phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Rather than a static set of strategies, it is an evolving and dynamic methodology capable of change (Hall et al, 2013).

Grounded research methods bring the authentic voices of participants forward, so that all theories that emerge are drawn directly from their experiences and perspectives, and spoken in their words. Grounded theory is valuable to research in that it avoids making assumptions; rather, it utilizes a neutral view of action in a sociocultural context (Engward, 2013). It is very useful to researchers exploring phenomena on which there exist very little or otherwise insufficient research. This makes the use of grounded theory very appropriate for socially just research (Engward, 2013).

The Role of Research in the Pursuit of Social Justice

Research in the social sciences has become increasingly focused on diversity and multiculturalism. More recently, the social justice perspective that grounded the field at the turn of the 20th century is also receiving increased attention (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Concurrently, feminist scholars (Moya, 2001; Roth, 2004; Sanchez, 2009) and scholars encouraging multiculturalism and cultural diversity (Manna et al, 2009; Sakamoto et al, 2009; Lopez, 2013) have criticized the pool of existing literature for its lack of attention to the needs and issues of currently marginalized populations in society (and in research) based on such status factors as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status, and religion. From these critiques has emerged an enhanced scholarly focus on investigating the effects of systematic forms of oppression, as well as a desire to empower these marginalized groups through

socially just research practices and research methodology and topics promoting social justice. As the participants in my study are marginalized on the basis of, at the very least, gender and ethnicity, conducting culturally competent research that allows their authentic voices and perceptions to be heard is empowering and may further the pursuit of social justice for these women.

At the heart of respectful socially just research is the value of interpersonal relationships and serving the needs of the community in which the research is being conducted. This ensures the opportunity for meaningful participation by the members of the community under investigation. Lyons et al. (2013) assert that research that is “dialogic and dialectic,” leads to transformative growth, and is empowering and serves as a mechanism for social justice. That is, the collaborative process of discerning meaning in lived experiences that should characterize all socially just qualitative research can, and should, contribute to the empowerment of research participants. Participants must be viewed and treated as research consultants and co-researchers in order to empower them and convey respect. Ultimately, the researcher may leave the community in which the research has been conducted. This departure and giving back to the community are closely connected and communicate to participants that they are honored and valued beyond their contributions to the research as “subjects (Lyons et al, 2013).”

At the foundation of a discussion on social justice research is an assumption that, while research methods have implicit scientific philosophies embedded in them that reflect values regarding knowledge and human behavior, users of this methodology also infuse their investigations with internally-localized values that render those

investigations non-neutral (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). This implies that scientific exploration is never value-free, regardless of approach or choice of methodology, but is culturally and temporally situated. Research is enacted by human beings, who bring their own unique perspectives and lenses to each exploratory endeavor. Although I am not a member of the Latina immigrant community, my experience working with members of this community for several years as a social worker has given me an awareness of the degree to which such women are marginalized in society. The attitudes and worldviews (and biases) of researchers permeate and influence their work from beginning to end, and any method can be liberating if used by competent researchers dedicated to the promotion of social justice and relief from oppression (Cokley & Awad, 2013). Research can be used either to perpetuate or to disrupt the sociocultural status quo, to further oppress or to empower marginalized groups, to provide an experience that "victim-blames" or seeks to liberate oppressed individuals and transform their lives. It is overly simplistic to claim that the research method alone determines the outcome. Rather, the intention behind, and the use of, that method better supports the goal of conducting socially just research.

As social workers, our own lenses through which we view and interpret these issues have been informed by our various theoretical orientations and perspectives, as well as by our varied experiences as scholars, clinicians, educators, and social activists. The concept of social justice should, by its focus on marginalized cultural groups and its explicit goal of social change, be viewed as a framework that is able to transform any research method into a socially just endeavor in the hands of competent researcher. Social justice research should be considered on a continuum ranging from knowledge

and awareness-building investigations to research that culminates in collaborative social action whose goal is changing oppressive systems and structures. To that end, this project's purpose and methodology can certainly be framed as promoting social justice by allowing oppressed people to give voice to their lived experiences perceptions. Perhaps, through building on the knowledge base regarding Latina immigrants, increased awareness of this community and their needs and strengths can incite social action to empower such women and relieve them from oppression.

Research Question

This study addressed the research question: "How do Latinas immigrating to Suffolk County, New York experience the process of acculturation?" I set out to explore their lives prior to migration, the process of relocating, and their lived experiences in the host culture. My goal was to understand the lived experiences of Latina women in Suffolk County, New York. In doing so, I sought a cogent conceptual model of acculturation that elaborates and expands on existing and accepted models of acculturation used in contemporary research, grounded in the experiences and perceptions of the participants.

Design of the Study

This was a qualitative, grounded-theory study utilizing in-depth semi-structured interviews with women identifying as Latina immigrants in Suffolk County, New York. I chose this design as qualitative studies can produce a richness and depth of information and knowledge of participants, and individual interviews permit a level of intimacy during

discussion that would likely be hindered in alternative formats (Berg, 2008; Charmaz, 2010).

The first phase of this study involved the literature review, development of research protocol, gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and conducting three pilot interviews. The second phase involved the concurrent gathering, analysis, and comparison of data through the use of semi-structured audiotaped interviews. The third phase overlapped with the second, and involved the development and synthesis of a theoretical model for the acculturation of Latina immigrants to their host culture, as well as the written narrative of the research process, findings, and discussion points.

First Phase – Pilot Interviews and Instrument Review

In order to determine credibility and dependability of study instruments, three pilot interviews were conducted. Criteria for participation in the pilot were: minimum age of 18, identifying as female, living in Suffolk County, New York, and born in Mexico, El Salvador, or Ecuador (not a United States native). Those countries were chosen for two reasons: their geographic spacing through Latin America and the prevalence of immigrants from those particular nations in Suffolk County. According to the Fiscal Policy Institute (2010), as of 2010 13% of all immigrants on Long Island were from El Salvador, 12% were from Mexico, and 9% were from Ecuador. Approval for the study from the Stony Brook University IRB was applied for and granted through submission of a written research protocol along with consent scripts, the interview guide, recruitment materials, the participant questionnaire, and IRB-generated forms. As I was aware of

potential concern over disclosure of the participants' legal status, I applied for and received from CORIHS a Waiver of Documented Consent, which allowed participants to verbally consent after being read a consent script rather than signing a consent form. Upon receiving approval, the research instruments were piloted in order to assess whether the materials were able to elicit appropriate and adequate responses. Apart from restructuring some questions, no analysis on the resulting data was conducted at that time.

Second Phase – Sampling, Recruitment, Data Collection and Analysis

Sampling Methods and Participant Recruitment

The proposed number of participants was 40, a number generally accepted for a qualitative research study (Berg, 2008). The actual sample size was 30, as thematic saturation had been achieved. Inclusive criteria were: minimum age of 18, female, living in Suffolk County, and born in Mexico, El Salvador, or Ecuador (not a United States native). Exclusionary criteria were: male, under the age of 18 (legally a minor), currently living outside of Suffolk County, and born somewhere other than Mexico, El Salvador, or Ecuador. This is considered "purposive sampling," which is appropriate when trying to reach a specialized population that is difficult to reach, such as immigrants (Kreuger & Lawrence, 2006). Purposive sampling is a method in which participants (or participant types) are selected with a specific purpose in mind. It is most appropriate when the researcher intends to identify cases for an in-depth investigation, when the purpose is not to generalize to the larger population but rather to gain a

deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon or type of person (Kreuger & Lawrence, 2006).

There are several geographic areas of Long Island, throughout Suffolk County, whose demographic makeup is primarily Hispanic, such as Brentwood, Central Islip, Patchogue, and Huntington Station (United States Census Bureau, 2010). I first attempted to recruit participants through two channels: distribution of IRB-approved flyers in those communities and direct referrals from a community organization. The flyers were designed in English (Appendix A) and Spanish (Appendix B), with the Spanish translation verified for accuracy by a native Spanish speaker. Both types of flyers were posted in various locations within the aforementioned communities, primarily in retail shopping areas such as supermarkets, in libraries, health centers, and laundry facilities. Additionally, I posted flyers at local colleges such as Suffolk County Community College and SUNY Farmingdale, as well as in churches in Brentwood and Central Islip. I attempted to post recruitment flyers at social service organization facilities, such as the Suffolk County Department of Social Services, but I was not permitted to do so.

A pastor of a local church serving the needs of the Latino population had given me a written agreement to interact with their congregation, utilize their facility for recruitment and interviewing, and to refer individuals for participation. However, that connection never came to fruition as the pastor discontinued contact prior to data collection. The pastor had agreed to allow me to speak before his congregation during a Sunday service to discuss the study and the need for participants. After canceling this

scheduled meeting on three occasions, he ceased responding to attempted contact via email and telephone calls.

After two months of attempted recruitment utilizing these methods and a response of only eight participants, it became apparent that additional efforts would be needed to attain a larger sample of participants. I returned to the aforementioned communities every few days to replenish and replace flyers, placed them in different locations, printed them on different colors of paper, and continued efforts to contact the pastor. I also contacted other churches serving the Hispanic community and received no response or responses of disinterest. In addition, I directly contacted human service organizations, such as FEGS, Family Service League of Long Island, and the Hispanic Counseling Center, serving the target community asking to place flyers in their waiting areas. While administrators at these sites were interested in my study, they all declined to assist in recruitment, citing legal or ethical constraints. Of those who responded to the flyers, some were men wanting to be included for the compensation. Others were men calling on behalf of their wives or female family members to determine whether they might allow the women to participate.

A request for recruitment modification was submitted to Stony Brook University CORIHS (Appendix C) requesting permission to directly recruit by interacting with potential participants at the time of flyer distribution, so as to address some of the fears of responding to an anonymous flyer and talking to a complete stranger. Upon receiving IRB approval for the modification, additional flyers were distributed at local community and cultural festivals, as well as in-person at the Brentwood Health Center and in community gathering areas such as shopping centers, bakeries, bodegas, and

parks. As I was able to discuss with prospective participants the purpose of the study and the nature of the interview process (that the interviews would be only audiorecorded, names would not be used, and that participants would not be identifiable through data in the study), they were able to relate to me as more than an anonymous name on a flyer, which helped to alleviate some of their anxiety and reluctance to participate. This yielded more response as evidenced by more phone calls from participants, as well as a few scheduling interviews at the time of first contact (when I met them and gave them the flyers).

In addition, "gatekeepers" were identified within the community who assisted the researcher in recruiting participants. Gatekeepers are defined as people or groups who are in a position to grant or facilitate access to a research site or group of potential participants (Kreuger & Lawrence, 2006; Berg, 2007). They may be formal or informal protectors of the setting or people involved in research, and these individuals generally hold high-ranking or pivotal positions in the hierarchy of the group under study. A gatekeeper who sees the research in a favorable light may vouch for the intentions of the researcher and improve access to the population, while a disapproving gatekeeper might become an immovable obstacle and block such access. One such individual was a librarian at the Brentwood Public Library, who facilitated distribution of recruitment materials in the library system and made direct referrals to participants. Two such participants were employees of the Brentwood Health Center, and gatekeepers in their own right. They were interviewed for the study and went on to give information to patients at the Health Center and at a local hospital, both of which serve the Hispanic community. Through these gatekeepers and the resultant snowball sampling (in which

referrals from existing participants lead to additional participants [Kreuger & Lawrence, 2006]), it was believed, after having analyzed the data to that point, that a sufficient number of women had been interviewed to reach saturation.

The demographics of the resulting study sample are displayed in the following table, which outlines the frequencies of each demographic category and the percentage of each occurrence within the total sample.

Table 1 ***Participant Characteristics (N=30)***

Variable	Frequency	Percentage of Total
Country of Origin		
Ecuador	10	33%
El Salvador	10	33%
Mexico	10	34%
Age of Participant		
18 – 25	5	17%
26 – 35	12	40%
36 – 50	6	20%
51 – 65	6	20%
over 65	1	3%
Legal Status		
Documented	11	37%
Undocumented	19	63%
Years in the USA		
Less than 5	3	10%
5 – 10	12	40%
11 – 15	8	26%
16 – 20	2	7%
21 – 25	2	7%
More than 25	3	10%
Marital Status		
Single	8	27%
Married	16	53%
Partnered	1	3%
Divorced	3	10%
Widowed	2	7%
Level of Education		
Less than HS Graduate	6	20%
HS Graduate	17	57%
Some College	0	0.0
College	5	16%
Graduate or Higher	2	7%
Works for Pay Outside Home		
Yes	22	73%
No	8	27%

Human Subjects Protection and Approval

Approval to engage in this human subjects research was obtained through Stony Brook University' Institutional Review Board (IRB). The project was first submitted for consideration in March 2013 was approved on June 11, 2013 after revisions to the recruitment materials. The modifications to the recruitment methods (Appendix C) were approved on September 11, 2013. As reflected in the materials submitted to the IRB as well as consent scripts provided and read to participants, there are potential risks and expected benefits for participation. A potential risk was emotional distress from discussion of traumatic events or topics. The expected benefits were not specific to the participant, but were related to the addition to existing knowledge on the Latina immigrant community. It was a collective, rather than individual, benefit. To protect participants from disclosure of their legal status, I requested and received a waiver of documented consent, which allowed participants to consent to being part of the study without signing their names to any documents. Thus, they could not be traced and identified. This was a necessity as the majority of participants were expected to be undocumented and could face legal consequences should they be identifiable as such. I made this waiver clear to them when setting up interviews and again before beginning the interview process. Participants were advised that no one would be identified in the final report.

Potential benefits to participants were discussed with each as well as outlined in the consent form. Benefits included making a substantive contribution to the social work knowledge base regarding Latina women and immigration. Risks included emotional and psychological distress from possibly reliving traumatic experiences. In addition, it

happened that one participant had an abusive husband and another works in a potentially dangerous profession. I had resources on hand for mental health and supportive services should they be indicated, and was able to offer resources to those two women. In both cases, it was declined. Participants were each given a $25.00 gift card as compensation for their time; this compensation was mentioned in the recruitment materials and approved by the IRB.

Data Collection – Instruments

The method of data collection for the study was semi-structured interviews with self-identified Latina immigrants. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to encourage participants to share their own perceptions and experiences while targeting the desired content. The interview guide (Appendix D) was constructed using questions and probes drawn from existing research and the knowledge base of some themes and topics salient to the Latina population and to the acculturation process. However, the questions were open-ended, non-leading, and made no assumptions about the participants. Rather, they probed for information and allowed the women to tell their own stories with gentle probing and direction of conversation.

The guide was refined in wording and content after the pilot interviews, and again after study interview number ten. The initial revision resulted from some questions being determined as too “closed” and others being redundant. After meeting participant number ten, as well as discussing the process to date and reviewing the data to that

point, additional questions and probes on traditional gender roles, isolation, and cultural affiliations were added.

In addition to the interview guide, a demographic questionnaire was created to collect basic demographic information such as age, country of origin, years in the United States, educational level, and marital status. This form was printed in English and Spanish and approved by the Stony Brook University IRB.

Data Collection – The Interview Process

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with individual participants, which were audio-recorded using a digital recorder. Those interviews were conducted in public spaces chosen by the women for their comfort and relative privacy, primarily in public libraries in Brentwood, Patchogue, and South Huntington (N=25). Two were conducted in coffee shops and the rest in public parks (N=3). These locations were chosen by the participants and were determined by their proximity to the individual's home or place of work as well as, in some cases, proximity to public transportation. All interviews were conducted by the same interviewer, who is bilingual.

Upon arrival for the interview, which was arranged either by phone or email, the participant was given the gift card. I read the consent script in the participant's choice of English (Appendix E) or Spanish (Appendix F) after giving her a copy to read along. After reading each section, I verified the participant's understanding of the content. After the entire script had been read, I asked if she had any questions or concerns and offered her a copy to keep for herself. She did not sign the consent, as a waiver of documented consent had been granted by the IRB.

Prior to the beginning of the interview itself, participants were given the demographic questionnaire to complete in her choice of English or Spanish (Appendices G and H, respectively). Some participants requested that I assist them with completion of the questionnaire as they were illiterate and could not do so themselves. As recommended by Berg (2008), the interview began with questions concerning housing and family composition in the participant's country of origin (COO). More sensitive information such as legal status and the process of immigration and sociocultural interactions were introduced toward the middle of the interview once the participant seemed to be comfortable with the interviewer and the direction of the discussion. The interview concluded with inquiry related to overall life satisfaction, future goals, and an invitation to discuss anything that may have been overlooked during the interview. By definition, as part of the process of grounded theory development, questions and their order may be modified, adapted, or discarded entirely based on the direction of the interview (Charmaz, 2010).

Throughout the process, notes were taken in an inconspicuous manner regarding changes in tempo, voice, and tone, as well as nonverbal cues and body language. After the interview was completed, I checked in with the participant to assess for emotional distress by asking if any part of the interview had been upsetting or disturbing to her. Only one participant indicated that she was upset by telling the story of her journey to the United States, but she indicated that she did not need further assistance or referrals. I then thanked each participant for her participation in the study. After the departure of the participant, I recorded any other observations or thoughts on the interview content (memos).

Data Management and Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is the process by which the researcher searches the data for relationships, meanings, and patterns. The process is inherently inductive that it seeks to discover specific elements of the lived experiences of participants and the connections between them (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). My ultimate goal was to construct a theoretical model demonstrating and explaining the process by which Latina immigrants acculturate to the host culture in Suffolk County, New York, based on the perceptions and lived experiences of participants in combination with my interpretations and process of attributing meaning to those perceptions and narratives (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

As previously stated, the interviews (which lasted between 36 and 114 minutes each) were digitally recorded. They were transferred to my laptop computer and then deleted from the recorder. The interviews were then transcribed to Word documents by me, and all related computer files were stored in a password encrypted folder and saved on two similarly secured flash drives for backup. Those flash drives were then stored in a safe with the paper transcripts, and updated as analysis progressed. Participants were assigned identification codes based on the first letter of their names, their country of origin, legal status at the time of the interview, and the interview number.

Data Coding

Ongoing data analysis occurred concurrent with data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through that concurrent process, I was able to constantly compare the incoming data to existing analyses. Thus, collection and analysis of data are

reciprocal in informing the process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each transcribed interview was hand-coded to extract recurring themes and patterns of the participant's life experiences. After uncovering these patterns, a database was created to organize the information for each participant. This database contained demographic information, responses to thematic questions and direct quotes on life experiences and perceptions, the researcher's memos, and a brief summary of each participant. Additionally, a code book (Appendix H) was created to operationalize each category and responses. Throughout the coding process, I referred continually to digital and written memos I had made to correspond with each interview to record my thoughts and insights on the participant's shared experience and the interview itself. I continued taking notes and memos throughout the data analysis process in order to focus my perceptions of the data and its meaning.

First, I performed open coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) on each completed transcript after the first ten interviews had been done. This involved the thorough reading of each document and using labels and margin notes to focus on key concepts discussed in the large quantities of raw qualitative data. Some such labels were words like "children," "food," "work," and "language." This allowed me to begin recognizing the repetition of common phrases and concepts.

Second, I began focused coding and category development (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process started after the first 20 interviews had been transcribed and open coded. Focused coding was the process by which I reexamined the work I had done in the first step and began isolating key concepts and recurring themes and grouping them into categories for the next step of analysis. Some such categories were "family,"

“traditions,” and “community.”

The third step of the coding process was the thematic coding. I started this work after transcribing all 30 interviews and completion of open and focused coding on each. This involved more intensive focus on the patterns that emerged during the focused coding; I studied and categorized those categories and groupings and used them to develop highly refined themes. Analysis of those themes, such as “gender roles,” “cultural identification,” and “civic engagement,” yielded theoretical concepts that became the building blocks of a new theoretical model on acculturation, as will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

Researcher reflexivity

As previously stated, throughout the all stages of data collection and analysis, I kept a book in which I made note of my own reactions to the data, kept track of issues with data collection and decisions made to address barriers, and wrote memos that reflected my insights into the meaning and relationship of different elements of the data. Some notes were observations on the participants and the interviews themselves, such as this memo written after an early interview:

“This individual appeared very nervous about the interview. It took some time to convince her that I wasn’t trying to catch her in a lie. She seems uneasy around people who are not from her culture and was not overly happy about having even her voice recorded. I’m really concerned that a lot of the interviews are going to start out like this; that would make this process very difficult.”

Other notes in the journal focused on methodology, such as insights about the content of the interview guide and the participants' reactions to some of the questions:

"This particular woman got very animated and verbal when I asked about opportunities she has found here compared to those in El Salvador. She seems pretty passionate about men and how they try to control women, and they can't do that here if the woman doesn't let them. I may need to focus more attention on different gender roles and expectations here in the United States."

There were also memos on my own reactions to participants' interview responses. This included reflection on my interactions with the women and how those interactions might have impacted their responses and attitude toward the interview:

"I have a note here that she became defensive and shut down a bit after our discussion on the importance of religion in her life. After listening to the interview, I think my personal feelings about organized religion may have come through when I asked about her perception that God would provide for her so she shouldn't worry about anything. I'll have to be more mindful about my tone and sounding judgmental."

The journal also included entries on my thoughts during the coding and analysis process and the development of my theoretical model:

"I keep hearing women talking about the role of women, women's work, what their husband and fathers wanted, what God expects from women. I hear other women talking about how being an American means being free, that men can't control you, that

they can do more with their lives. They feel that women have much more power here. I think this could be a big deal!"

This journal was of great value to the study in a variety of ways. Its use allowed me to keep track of my progress and the research process by creating an audit trail (Cresswell, 2007) by which I could track the development of my theoretical model. It was extremely helpful during the process of data analysis and theory development by helping me to reflect on my thoughts and my interactions with the participants, as well as the methodology I used. It helped me to maintain self-awareness (vital for any social worker). Finally, it served as an instrument of trustworthiness for the study itself (Cresswell, 2007).

Methodological Rigor

Trustworthiness of the study

Unlike quantitative research methods, in which the researcher seeks to establish validity and reliability as measures of rigor, the ability to establish trustworthiness is the major task of qualitative research. This is especially important in light of continuing skepticism in the scientific community over the relevance and credibility of qualitative methodology (Houghton et al, 2013).   The measure of a study's trustworthiness is rooted in its credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, as set forth by Houghton et al (2013).

Credibility

There are a number of methods offered in the literature on research methodology for ensuring the credibility of a qualitative study. Member checking is suggested as one such method, in which participants are consulted during the analysis process to gain their perspectives on the accuracy and relevance of emerging themes (Creswell, 2007). However, this was not an option for my study as the women involved participated under the condition of confidentiality and anonymity. Thus, I did not retain contact information after the interview was completed. The same sources also suggest that immersion in the phenomenon - in this case, the cultural community in which I was conducting the study - is helpful to the development of sensitivity to and understanding of the experiences and meanings that lie within. In the course of conducting this research, particularly during recruitment, I spent a great deal of time in the Hispanic community, both observing the individuals living therein and interacting with them. While this time in the Hispanic community and my observations are not part of the study data, it added some richness to my understanding of how women in these communities live in their day-to-day lives.

It is essential to demonstrate efforts toward peer debriefing both for credibility and for the researcher to maintain self-awareness, especially when the topic of inquiry may be sensitive. Peer debriefing allows the researcher to discuss and explore thoughts and ideas about the inquiry outside of the insular bubble of his or her own perceptions with an informed yet detached professional peer (Creswell, 2007). Peer debriefing was engaged in on a regular basis throughout the research process with my mentor as well as with a doctoral student colleague.

Dependability

There are no statistical tests or confidence intervals in qualitative research to help “prove” that a study can be thought of as valid and applicable, as would be employed in a quantitative project. Creswell (2007) suggests the use of thick description in communicating the results of a study, which puts forth the idea that in-depth and detailed information in itself implies a level of trustworthiness. As I am utilizing direct quotes and detailed narrative to support my findings, those conclusions are therefore dependable. It should be noted that it is not the qualitative researcher’s goal to present information that can be transferred beyond the context of the study.

Confirmability

Step-by-step replication of the study (which would require at least two researchers) was not possible to apply to this study as it was doctoral dissertation research meant to be conducted by one person. However, the inquiry audit is one other path toward dependability. I met with my dissertation sponsor on a weekly basis to examine the research process, data analysis, and the study outcomes to determine whether the conclusions I drew were supported by the data. Cresswell (2007) also attests to the value of the “inquiry audit” for confirmability. The inquiry audit is defined as an examination of the research documentation (through critical incidents, documents, and interview notes) and a running account of the process (such as the investigator's

daily journal) of the inquiry. The audit examines the process of the inquiry. The inquiry audit also examines the product--the data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations--and attests that it is supported by data and is internally coherent so that the findings and conclusions may be deemed relevant and acceptable (Cresswell, 2007).

Transferability

The use of the inquiry audit as described above, as well as the audit trail, are both strategies for establishing confirmability in a qualitative study. The latter involves synthesis by the researcher of careful records of all steps in a study, all sources of information, and all data-gathering methods. This trail of information is needed for the audit to occur (Creswell, 2007). If a researcher's process and method is retraceable, it is more likely the data can be relied upon as having come from stated sources and as being representative of stated interpretations. The reflexivity journal as previously discussed is important to all aspects of trustworthiness in a research study by serving as ongoing documentation of the researcher's thoughts and feelings while processing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data.

Having described my research methodology and the rationale for its use, I will, in the next chapter, set forth my findings including the emerging model on acculturation based on those findings.

CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS

Through data analysis, a model emerged of the process by which Latina immigrants in Suffolk County, New York, acculturate. Acculturation takes place through a series of choices the individual makes in the process of altering her life trajectory. The process of acculturation, and the success or lack of success in acculturation, center on the outcome of the participant's interaction with, and relationship to, the host community. This process is depicted in the model through the lens of feminist theory. It must be noted that the choices depicted in this model reflect actual options available to the individual, and this model is not meant to invalidate the very real presence of concrete barriers to acculturation, as will be discussed later in this paper. The theoretical and process models (Figures 1 and 2, respectively) will follow the presentation of findings, through which I will present thick descriptions of each element with the words and narratives of the participants.

The context of the model represents the community, social, and cultural environments in which the process of acculturation occurs. Participants share a value and knowledge base by virtue of their status as immigrants to the United States culture, as well as sharing the vast majority of cultural norms and traditions. Based on their experiences and perceptions as shared during the interview process, as well as simple demographics, the 30 participants in the study were each assigned to one of four theoretical categories of acculturative status, as set forth in Table 2.

Operationalizing Acculturation

I will begin by explaining my concept of successful acculturation. As previously described, some definitions of acculturation are based on the assumption that "successful" acculturation is interchangeable with assimilation. This means that those theories and researchers using them assume that the goal of acculturation is complete integration with and absorption into the host culture, forsaking all aspects of the birth culture. Thus, those aforementioned studies consider "successful" acculturation to be assimilation, and any retention of traditional practices and beliefs to be "unsuccessful."

In contrast, I define the level of success of the acculturative process in the context of the acculturative goals of the participant. If the individual herself is satisfied with the degree of acculturation achieved, whether she is fully integrated into the host culture or lives in an isolated immigrant community, she will be considered as successfully acculturated. A woman who expresses dissatisfaction with her level of acculturation will be considered unsuccessfully acculturated. My theoretical framework on acculturation is based on choices and decisions made by the participant. Thus, success is based on the perception of the participant, not my opinion as the researcher.

However, it should be noted that, as acculturation is a fluid process, the participant's perception of her acculturation and, indeed, her acculturative goals, may change over time. Therefore, she may at different points in her life be categorized differently in terms of this model; the categorization determined in this study reflects the participants' perceptions at the time of the interviews

Figure 1 Acculturative Categories

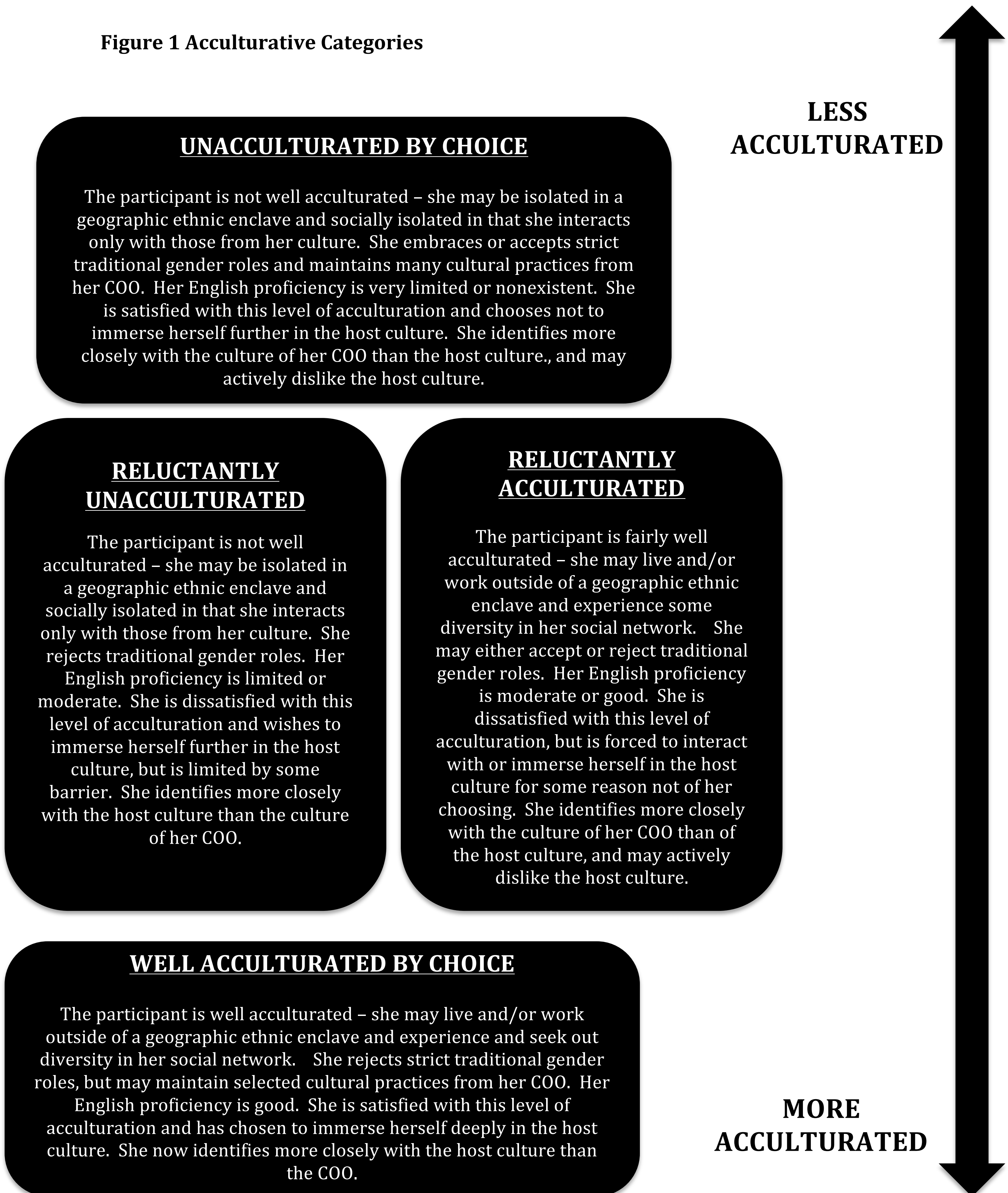
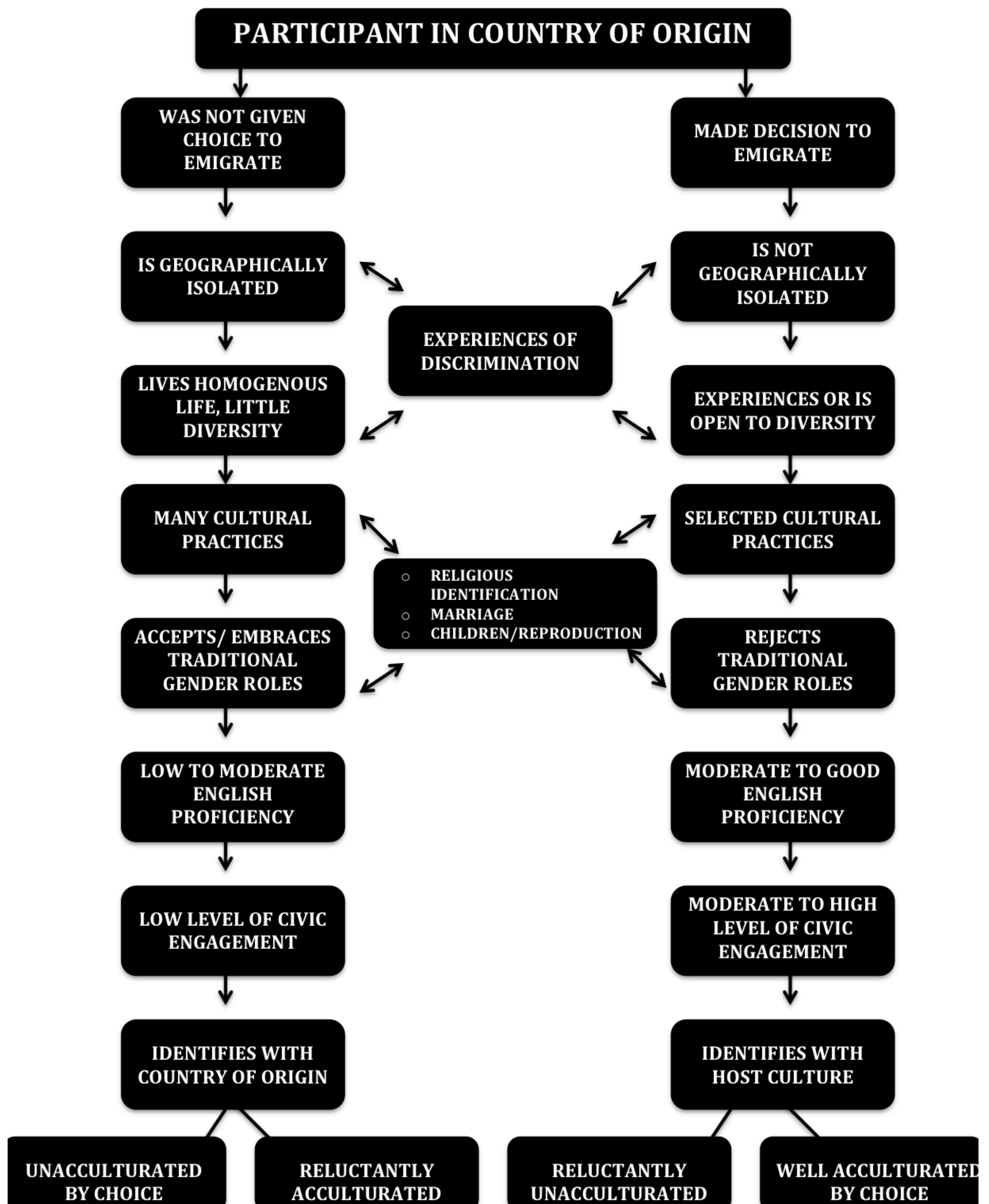


Figure 2 Model of Acculturative Process Through Choice



The model shown above in Figure 2 sets forth the process of acculturation that I am proposing in linear format, based on the findings and my analysis. It explains the acculturation experiences of the women in this study according to their perceptions of those experiences. There were definitive trajectories of choices and decisions that led participants to be categorized as they were. It must be acknowledged that the model reflects actual choices available to the participants; there were very real and concrete barriers to acculturation experienced by some women that could not be ameliorated simply by choice, such as problems associated with being undocumented.

Categories in the center of the model, such as experiences of discrimination, had a bidirectional effect on the life trajectories of the participants in that outcomes within that category were both dependent on and influenced outcomes in adjacent categories. For example, being geographically isolated may act as protection from experiences of discrimination, but experiencing discrimination may be a factor toward choosing to live in geographic isolation.

According to the emergent model, acculturation and its success or lack thereof begin with the decision to relocate to the United States. Women who did not make the decision to emigrate were categorized as either unacculturated by choice or reluctantly unacculturated, meaning that they did not wish to become integrated into the host culture. Conversely, those who wanted to relocate tended to be those women who desired a high level of interaction with the host culture, and they were categorized as being well acculturated by choice or reluctantly unacculturated. As the various life choices depicted in the model are made, the individual becomes either more or less

acculturated; those categorized as “reluctant” have expressed a dissatisfaction with fulfillment of their acculturative goals for themselves.

The model shown in Figure 1 illustrates the four categories of acculturation that emerged from the data, with descriptions of the participants assigned to each category. They are shown on a continuum of being more or less acculturated, with the “reluctant” categories equidistant as the midpoint between the two terminal categories. That model should be seen as a descriptor illustrating acculturative “success” and the fulfillment of acculturative goals.

Theoretical Categories of Acculturation

In consideration of the “goals” of successful acculturation as previously discussed, I assessed, based on the experiences related by participants, whether they were “successful” or “unsuccessful” in the fulfillment of those goals. The degree of success, expressed by definition as well-acculturated or unacculturated along with choice or reluctance in level of acculturation, will be shown to be dependent on several factors. Those factors are their perspectives of their life experiences in the country of origin; the experience of immigration itself; and the experience of their lives in the host culture, all in the context of the individuals’ acculturative goals for themselves.

I am conceptualizing acculturation, for the purpose of this study, as the process by which the participant has been able to live in Suffolk County and adapt her way of living to a degree in which she feels comfortable in the host culture and satisfied with her level of immersion in the new culture. The acculturative categories I will define

should be considered as a continuum, in which the terminal ends represent a level of acculturation in which the participant is satisfied and the intermediate categories are representative of some level of dissatisfaction with acculturative level.

Unacculturated by Choice

Women who were unacculturated by choice tended to be living in the United States reluctantly. They either did not make the decision to emigrate in the first place or were compelled to remain in the United States for reasons outside of their perceived control. In most cases, the decision to emigrate was made by male figures in the participants' lives, either their fathers or husbands. Some came alone, and others came with their husbands. All but one woman in this category were living in the United States illegally at the time of the interview.

These women tended to be geographically isolated in that they live in ethnic enclaves or "cultural cocoons." They reside in neighborhoods predominantly inhabited by others of their culture; if not from their countries of origin specifically, then from other Hispanic cultures. These neighborhoods contain the vast majority of resources needed to sustain their lifestyles, including ethnic grocery stores, health care clinics, shopping, and services operated and patronized by those of Hispanic heritage.

As such, the vast majority of those residing in these enclaves were primarily Spanish-speaking, with little diversity and minimal presence of people not of Hispanic heritage. The majority of women in this category had limited or no English proficiency. Most participants in this category reported having little need or desire to leave these

communities and having little or no interaction with people not of their culture. Most also reported having little experience with discrimination on the basis of ethnicity.

Participants in this acculturative category tended to maintain most traditional cultural practices from their countries of origin. These included preparation and/or consumption of traditional food and drink, listening to Spanish music and watching Spanish television shows. Additionally, some celebrated holidays and cultural days of celebration. The majority of women in this category identified as practicing Catholics and considered their religion a vital component of their lives, and accordingly attended church services in Hispanic churches and participated in religious ceremonies and considered others in their congregations as a significant social support. In essence, they lived in the host country similarly to how they lived in their countries of origin.

Women who were unacculturated by choice tended to be married and living with their husbands, and most had at least one child. Many had multiple children. Overall, they either accepted, passively enacted, or embraced traditional gender roles as found in the patriarchal Hispanic culture. Most considered themselves subservient or secondary to men and tended to defer to the men in their lives for guidance. They considered their purpose to be the maintenance of the home and the caretaking of the home and the family. Most women in this category did recognize increased opportunities for women in the new culture but were not particularly interested in availing themselves of those opportunities. Some worked outside the home to supplement household income.

Participants in this category exhibited a low level of civic engagement. They had little or no knowledge of United States governmental policies on immigration and a

vague understanding at best of pending policy changes that could impact their legal status and rights as immigrants. These women, despite having resided in the United States for a number of years (ranging from 2 to 23 years), identified more closely with their countries of origin than with the host country and, in some cases, expressed outright dislike for aspects of the culture in the United States.

Well Acculturated by Choice

Participants in this category made the decision to come to the United States and reside here, and so live here by choice. Most came to this country alone. Reasons for leaving the country of origin included recreational travel, natural disasters, escaping poverty or other adverse conditions, and pursuit of educational opportunities. Most had family already residing in this country. Of those in this category, nearly two-thirds were living in the United States legally at the time of the interview and resided in the United States from seven to 26 years.

Women in this group tended to live outside of ethnic enclaves, in more diverse communities. They may, at times, patronize ethnic markets, but overwhelmingly chose to shop, receive services, and work outside of culturally homogenous neighborhoods. They choose to interact with a diverse group of people and have multicultural social networks and supports, and are either open to or welcoming of such diversity. Nearly all of these women had moderate to good English proficiency. Most have had some experiences with discrimination on the basis of their Latina heritage, but none reported experiencing violence, actual or threatened.

Most women in this category tended to maintain some selected cultural practices and traditions, primarily preparation and/or consumption of ethnic food and drink. A few, however, have chosen to abandon all practices from their country of origin. The majority of participants do not identify as strongly religious, although they may have been raised observing the Catholic faith. Members of this group may be married and/or have children, but all to some degree have rejected traditional gender roles as seen in the patriarchal Hispanic culture. They are aware of the diminished control that men have over them in the United States. They seek identity and purpose outside of the roles of wives, mothers, and caretakers. They appreciate and embrace the opportunities available to women in this culture that may not have been options in their countries of origin, and most have taken advantage of these opportunities in some way and aspire to avail themselves of others in the future, such as furthering education or starting businesses. Most worked outside the home for pay.

Women who are well acculturated by choice tended to exhibit moderate to high levels of civic engagement. They were aware of current government policies toward immigration and the pending policy changes that would impact the rights of immigrants in this country. Many had strong opinions on the efficacy and functioning of the government and leadership and exhibited understanding of the role of the government's stance on immigration in the experiences of immigrants. They tended to identify more closely with the host culture than the culture into which they were born. Many have attained citizenship and expressed satisfaction with their life in this country.

Reluctantly Unacculturated

Participants in this category made the decision to come to the United States and reside here, and so live here by choice. Most came to this country alone. They tended to come to escape poverty or other adverse conditions. Most had family already residing in this country. Every woman in this category was living in the United States illegally at the time of the interview, and resided in the United States from six to 15 years.

Women in this group tended to live inside ethnic enclaves, but sometimes emerged from them to shop and receive services from outside their communities. They are open to diversity and have hopes to interact with a more diverse social network, but currently primarily socialize with those of their own cultures. Nearly all of these women had limited or moderate English proficiency, but wanted to improve their command of the language. Most have had some experiences with discrimination on the basis of their Latina heritage, but none reported experiencing violence, actual or threatened.

Most women in this category tended to maintain some selected cultural practices and traditions, primarily preparation and/or consumption of ethnic food and drink. The majority of participants do not identify as strongly religious, although they may have been raised observing the Catholic faith. Members of this group may be married and/or have children, but all to some degree have rejected traditional gender roles as seen in the patriarchal Hispanic culture. They are aware of the diminished control that men have over them in the United States. They seek identity and purpose outside the roles of wives, mothers, and caretakers. They appreciate and embrace the opportunities available to women in this culture that may not have been options in their countries of

origin, and aspire to avail themselves of others in the future, such as furthering education or starting businesses. All worked outside the home for pay.

Women who are reluctantly unacculturated tended to exhibit moderate to high levels of civic engagement. They were aware of current government policies toward immigration and the pending policy changes that would impact the rights of immigrants in this country, particularly themselves. Most had strong opinions on the efficacy and functioning of the government and leadership and exhibited understanding of the role of the government's stance on immigration in the experiences of immigrants. They tended to identify more closely with the host culture than the culture to which they were born. They viewed their status as udocumented as the primary barrier to further acculturation and achievement of acculturative goals.

Reluctantly Acculturated

Women who are reluctantly acculturated tended to express their desire to return to their countries of origin. They either were not given a voice in the decision to emigrate in the first place or were compelled to remain in the United States for reasons outside of their control. In most cases, the decision to emigrate was made by male figures in the participants' lives, either their fathers or husbands. Of the five women in this category, three were living here illegally and two legally at the time of the interview.

Women in this group tended to live within ethnic enclaves, but regularly emerge from the neighborhood of residence out of necessity. They most often shop and receive services within their ethnic communities. These women prefer to speak Spanish but have moderate levels of English proficiency, as they have found it necessary to learn

some English in order to communicate with those outside their culture. They are forced to interact with a diverse group of people and have multicultural social networks, but are not welcoming of such diversity and prefer to interact with others of Latino heritage. Most have had some experiences with discrimination on the basis of their Latina heritage, but none reported experiencing violence, actual or threatened.

Most women in this category chose to maintain some selected cultural practices and traditions, primarily preparation and/or consumption of ethnic food and drink. Some reported that there were desired traditions that they were unable to maintain, such as holiday celebrations or wearing of traditional clothing. The majority of participants identified as strongly religious and felt that their faith was an important part of their lives. There was expressed reliance on their religious principles and the presence of a higher power to determine their life trajectories, and they tended to attribute life outcomes to the will of God. Members of this group may be married and/or have children, and may accept or reject traditional gender roles, but did not express strong feelings about gender expectations either way. They are aware of the diminished control that men have over them in this country, and acknowledge the opportunities available to women in this culture that may not have been options in their countries of origin. Some have taken advantage of these opportunities in some way, such as attending classes, getting driver's licenses, or seeking employment. Most worked outside the home for pay.

Women who were reluctantly acculturated exhibited a low to moderate level of civic engagement. They had some rudimentary knowledge of United States government policies on immigration and a vague understanding at best of pending policy changes that could impact their rights as immigrants. This seemed to stem more

from apathy or disinterest, rather than confusion or ignorance. These women, despite having resided in the United States for a number of years, identified more closely with their countries of origin than with the host country and, in some cases, expressed outright dislike for aspects of the culture in the United States and a desire to return the country of origin.

Table 2 Theoretical Categories of Acculturation - *n=30*

	Acculturated by Choice	**Reluctantly Acculturated**	**Reluctantly Unacculturated**	**Unacculturated by Choice**
Total Number	11	5	4	10
Mexican	3	1	2	4
Ecuadorian	2	3	2	3
El Salvadorian	6	1	0	3
Legal Status				
Documented	7	2	0	1
Undocumented	4	3	4	9

Identified Acculturation Factors

After completing thematic coding of the data, I was able to refine the patterns and themes and isolate a series of factors, which appeared to be directly related to acculturative status and achievement of acculturative goals for the participants. Each factor as described will include direct quotes and statements from the participants as part of the audit trail (Cresswell, 2007).

Level of English Proficiency

While some participants chose to conduct the interview in English and others in Spanish, that alone was not sufficient to determine the actual level of proficiency in the

language of the host culture. Some women were completely unable to understand or speak English, nor could they write in it or understand the written language. Other participants were able to carry on simple conversation in English, and were able to understand some of the language as written. Many were able to carry on an intensive conversation in English with little or no difficulty. They could read and write in English, and were equally comfortable speaking in English or Spanish.

The majority of the women who were categorized as being unacculturated by choice had little or no command of the English language. They preferred to speak Spanish at home and indicated that they did not see much value in learning English at this time.

> Yes, I only speak very little English. In my home, we speak only Spanish. My friends are Salvadorian and everywhere I go people are Hispanic. I think I should maybe learn English some day, but right now I don't know how (25 year old from El Salvador).

> I don't worry about learning English because I don't need it. Where I am, where I live, everybody is like me and everybody speaks English. I have so much to do and so many other things to worry about. I don't need to think about speaking English when nobody else I know does. Why would I? (36 year old from Ecuador).

Other women had limited English proficiency but indicated that they had interest in gaining a better grasp of the language. One participant could not speak or understand English but could read and write in it, as she has an auditory processing disorder that prevents her from being able to process the language. Some women

(primarily categorized as reluctantly unacculturated) stated that they would like to attend ESL classes or intended to do so in the future:

> Everywhere I go, where I work, where I live, where I shop, everybody speaks Spanish. So I haven't had a chance to learn, but I will. I have to speak English soon, people get upset if you are here a long time and you don't learn. I think they're right, because if they moved to Mexico, they would have to learn to speak Spanish. And when my daughter comes here, I want her to know everything possible (22 year old from Mexico).

> Yes, some English, but I'm much more comfortable with Spanish. I would like to speak it better but, in all honestly, I haven't had the time to really make the effort to learn. From the time I came here I've had to work constantly to support my children, so learning English was not my priority. I'm a bus driver right now, so I need to be able to communicate with the children and their parents, and people at school. But other than that, I haven't really had a need to learn more. But I should, and I will (56 year old from Ecuador).

A number of women, categorized as well acculturated by choice, spoke English very well and appeared to be as comfortable speaking English as Spanish. Some had been taught in school in their countries of origin, others had made a concerted effort to learn upon relocating to the United States, and yet others had learned it through exposure and practical use living in their new communities:

> It took me a long time to learn English because I was afraid to talk to anybody who was not Hispanic. I started learning from people in the office at the hotel, then later I took a few classes and I just learned over time. My husband, he still speaks very little English (46 year old from El Salvador).

> Pretty much everybody in my area who worked with tourists had to learn English. I took classes in school, got books on the language to practice, and learned the rest from using the language in real life. I think that's the best way to learn. I don't think I would have necessarily been accepted to my school without it, and not being proficient in English would have made school so much harder. As it is, textbooks were a challenge because there were still many words and phrases I could not understand immediately (44 year old from Mexico).

From the data, it appeared that the women who came to the United States legally and are residing here legally now, as well as those who chose to become proficient in English for practical reasons, were able to access resources to make learning opportunities available, even if those resources were as informal as prolonged exposure to the language.

Children and Reproduction

The research literature and information on public health in Latin American countries show that it is common, if not expected, for families to be large in size. Women in Hispanic cultures are raised with the expectation of bearing multiple children as a cultural norm (Rodriguez et al, 2007). Of the 30 participants, eight reported having no children at this time and, for some, this was a conscious choice. They were categorized as being well acculturated by choice.

> I'm dating someone now, an American guy. He's in law school, a nice man. But I'm happy right now being free and having my life and my time

for myself, with no children. Maybe that will change but, if not, that's okay (28 year old from El Salvador).

Maybe someday I'll find a good man and get married. I love children, maybe I'll have children. One thing here, you don't need to have a husband to have children! (31 year old from Ecuador).

Fourteen of the participants had either one or two children. These women tended to be intensely focused on their children and expressed a great deal of concern over their futures in the United States, and tended to speak of them frequently during the interview:

When I left, three years ago, my daughter was three years old. I look at her, and I see the possibility of so much more for her. I want her to have a chance for more. She's about to start school there, and the education is so poor. I want her to learn, to have a good education and go to college so she can get a good job. I want my daughter to have opportunities and choices that she will not have if she stays in Mexico (22 year old from Mexico).

The remaining eight women had three or more children, and all were categorized as being unacculturated by choice or reluctantly acculturated. The fact that in most of these cases, the children were adults indicates that the participants who are old enough to have grown children more closely followed the cultural norm of having large families. This may further indicate that younger generations of Hispanic women are choosing to have smaller families. In some cases, the women came to the United States to live with their adult children and help to raise their grandchildren:

> I live with my oldest son and his family. The two oldest are married and have children and grandchildren, and my youngest son never married. Maybe some day he will, he is over 30 years old already! I take care of my great-grandchildren while their mother is working. The youngest is two and the oldest is six. I cook most of the meals for my son and his family, and take care of their home (64 year old from Mexico).

Identification as Religious

Nearly all women in the study identified as Catholic and said that they were raised practicing that religion in their countries of origin. One woman works in the sex trade and indicated that she does not attend church any more because she is too ashamed and feels she is not worthy to attend. However, a number of participants did not indicate that religion was important or openly stated that they were not as observant as they used to be or outright did not like organized religion:

> No, I don't go to church any more. In Mexico I did, everybody did, it was expected. But here, no. It's not very important to me at all (66 year old from Mexico).

> In El Salvador it was more important. Here, not so much. I believe in God and I pray sometimes. But we only go to church a few times a year. Religion here is not such a big part of the culture, I think. People are too busy to go to church (46 year old from El Salvador).

Some women, who were primarily categorized as unacculturated by choice or reluctantly acculturated, indicated that their religion is still important to them and they

observe it fairly faithfully. They seemed to consider their religion and the spiritual community as significant supports:

> You know I used to, but not any more but I keep it in my mind because I know in any situation especially if I need help, I just ask God to help me and every time He is always with me (51 year old from El Salvador).

> Back in Mexico my family traveled to go to Sunday Mass every week. Like I said, I go to church when I can. I pray to God every night, I pray that soon I can see my daughter again and that I can see my parents again some day before they are gone. I have to believe that God is watching out for me, and that is how I made it here (22 year old from Mexico).

> I'm not able to go to church very often, but I try to live according to the Catholic faith. I do believe that God will always help me and will not give me more than I can handle. Sometimes when I am very upset, I can pray to God and it helps me to feel calmer (36 year old from Ecuador).

A few women still considered themselves very devoutly religious and were deeply involved in the church and the religious community. They were all categorized as unacculturated by choice. They expressed a great deal of pride in this devotion to and observation of their faith:

> My parents were religious people and raised us the same way, to be faithful to God. If you are faithful to God and live according to His word, you will be rewarded for it. I've raised my children the same way. My younger son usually doesn't want to come to church with me any more, but that is his choice to make. He has to work, I understand, and he can determine his relationship with God himself. My friends and I, we all attend the same church. So we have that in common and we spend time

> together after services. I consider my relationship with God to be the center of my life, because my life is a gift from God. My children are a gift from God. So I think I live my life to honor God (56 year old from Ecuador).

> Well, I go to church three times each week, and I work in the church before and after Mass, cooking for homeless people. I'm glad to have a chance to serve God in His house (64 year old from Mexico).

All women who reported regularly attending church services indicated that they went to a Catholic church where services were delivered in Spanish, and the members of the congregation and the clergy were all Hispanic. It should be noted that the women who were most devout were older women with several children. It could be inferred that adherence to religious doctrine contributed to the imperative to reproduce, as the Catholic faith limits women's reproductive choices and prohibits contraception while encouraging the practice of bearing multiple children (Ruether, 2008). In addition, women in the study who identified as strongly religious were more likely to be geographically isolated and insulated in ethnic enclaves and to adhere to traditional gender roles.

Decision to Emigrate

This is the most basic choice in acculturation. If the process of acculturation occurs through a series of choices made by each individual, it begins with the decision to uproot life and relocate to a new country and a new culture. Women in the study

came to the United States for a variety of reasons. Six of them were compelled to do so by a man or men in their lives, and all were unacculturated by choice:

> My husband decided we should come, so we came (25 year old from Ecuador).

> My husband, he wanted to come here. It was his decision (25 year old from El Salvador).

Three participants relocated out of fear. Two were categorized as well acculturated by choice, and the third was reluctantly unacculturated. They indicated that there was a great deal of violent crime in their communities and they decided that it was safer to leave and make a new life than to stay and risk becoming victims:

> Things were getting kind of bad in my country, in my city. There it is mostly fishing and shipping, and working in the factories, so there are mainly men around. When I was 17, I was attacked by a couple of men but I got away. I think this made my father see that it was not safe for me to live there much longer, between that and there were problems with the government and the military in El Salvador (35 year old from El Salvador).

> I wanted to do more with my life. I respect my mother very much, like I said, she is a wonderful woman. But I wanted to see what else was out there. Also, where we lived it was getting very bad with the violence. So much crime, full of drugs (24 year old from Mexico).

> We lived in the capitol city and my father owned a business with his brother. My mother, she worked in the office helping him with customers. Crime was very bad in the city then, I think it still is. My mother went out to get lunch for herself and my father and uncle and got caught in a shooting, a gang shooting. She was shot twice and died. I have family

> here on Long Island, an aunt and uncle and some cousins. They were happy here, so my family always considered coming here someday. But in El Salvador, the crime and violence were getting very bad. There was violence from the police, the military, the gangs. I was 18, my older brothers were 20 and 21, and my younger brother was 15. My father was afraid we would be hurt or killed and we were afraid every day (28 year old from El Salvador).

Two participants left their countries of origin because of earthquakes in El Salvador that destroyed their homes. One woman, a 56 year old from Ecuador, left to escape an abusive husband:

> Because I divorced my husband, who was a controlling and abusive man, and decided that my children and I would be best off here, far away, where I could work and provide well for us. I wanted to raise my children away from his influence and away from his family, because they were bad people like him. I had family here who were living well, so when I decided to start working to come here, they began looking for a job and an apartment for us.

Several women came to the United States for recreational travel and chose to stay, either by finding work and gaining legal status or by simply letting their tourist visas expire and staying. A 50-year-old woman from Ecuador, however, came as a tourist and was unable to leave. Her young son became very ill and was hospitalized and, during the time in which he was required to be under medical care in the United States, her and her husband's visas expired.

> Now my son has sixteen years here and he has family here, his friends are here, his family is here and I told you we came here as tourists so we

> have no documentation to be here now. It was frustrating all this time because I have a lot of good things there but I stay here for him. Unfortunately, when you have a son you have to think of more than you, you have to think of him. His life is here; he doesn't know his country.

The vast majority of women came to the United States in pursuit of other opportunities. Some came for school or work, but most left to escape poverty in their countries of origin. They had family or friends already in the United States and were told of jobs readily available and greatly improved standards of living here, and wished to take advantage of these opportunities for themselves and their families.

Escape from Poverty:

> Well…you see, we were very poor. Very, very poor. We couldn't eat that much of what we grew because we had to sell it to survive. And because other people were also very poor, they could not pay much for it (31 year old from Ecuador).

> I come here because everybody say this is the best country in the world and you can have the best life here. Back home things were really bad. We have to work all day and we take home very little money (37 year old from Mexico).

Seeking a Better Life and Opportunities:

> When I left, three years ago, my daughter was three years old. I look at her, and I see the possibility of so much more for her. I want her to have a chance for more. I had her when I was 16, and I don't want her to be a 16

year old mother like I was, and like my sister was, and my own mother. She deserves better. There is a much better chance at least, and I don't think it could be worse than what her life would be in Mexico (22 year old from Mexico).

I wanted to make a better life for myself and I wanted to make money to send home to help my family as much as I can (26 year old from El Salvador).

The majority of the women who came to the United States to escape poverty did so illegally and were categorized as unacculturated by choice or reluctantly unacculturated. Their stated reasons for this was the inability to earn sufficient funds to pay for legal documentation, as well as the difficulty and danger in waiting long enough in adverse living conditions for paperwork to be processed. In order to pay for illegal crossings, most women either received financial assistance from relatives already living in the United States or their families in the country of origin borrowed money to pay for them to be smuggled to the United States.

Cultural Identification

Participants identified themselves, either implicitly or explicitly, as identifying more closely with either the United States culture or the culture of their country of origin. This was an important factor to determining acculturative status and category; the culture with which a woman chooses to identify herself, in the context of cultural norms she chooses to or is compelled to practice, is a strong indicator of her acculturative goals and attainment thereof. Women who identified with the host culture tended to be

categorized as well acculturated by choice or reluctantly unacculturated as their *desire* was immersion in the host culture. A few women expressed outright dislike for some aspects of the culture in the United States, such as hectic lifestyles, focus on work, perceived lack of focus on family, and materialism. These participants were categorized as either unacculturated by choice or reluctantly acculturated:

> Honestly, I do not like Americans much. Everything here is about money and owning more things, that is all that's important. Not family. Women here do not spend much time with their children, they do not dress appropriately and respect their elders. Neither do men. People here only care about themselves. Very selfish (25 year old from Ecuador).

> I think it's very loud, and everybody moves too quickly. People are very worried about money and buying things, and they don't worry enough about their families and being good people. I like being with other people from my country, they agree on things that are more important (25 year old from El Salvador).

> I'm not sure, but I still think like an Ecuadorian most of the time, because Americans think and act very different, I think. They worry more about themselves and money and time, and less about their families (34 year old from Ecuador).

Conversely, women who were acculturated by choice or reluctantly unacculturated identified more closely with the host culture and, in some cases, expressed great pride in this identification, as well as their choice and perceived ability to consider themselves "American" :

> I feel I have more freedom. I have ambition and more opportunities. Someday, I will have every option open to me, when I can be here legally. I watch American TV, listen to rock and pop music. I shop at the mall. I

> hope one day I can become a citizen so I can express my opinion of things and vote. Those choices, to be able to do these things (24 year old from Mexico).

> I love my life here over all, and I'm so glad I could give my daughters a life here instead of in El Salvador. American culture, to me, is a culture of freedom and hope (46 year old from El Salvador).

Maintaining Traditional Cultural Practices

Another factor in determining acculturative status is the extent to which the participant maintains traditional cultural practices and her perception of the value of maintaining those practices. I isolated this as a separate category from cultural characteristics such as religiosity and family composition because I conceptualized this as reflecting the daily routines of life. Women who were unacculturated by choice and reluctantly acculturated tended to maintain more traditional practices, and many did so out of comfort and wanting to maintain their heritage for their children:

> We still cook and eat foods from our country and listen to Spanish music. I still wear the indigenous clothing of my people (31 year old from Ecuador).

> My culture has many good traditions, very old ones. I cook and eat Mexican food, and listen to Spanish music, and watch novelas, but there is more to being Mexican than food and music. I want her [my daughter] to know that, and belong to both cultures (22 year old from Mexico).

> ...it is easy since the markets here sell many of the same things as the markets back home. American food is greasy and full of bad things, I think. I'm sorry if I offend you, but that is what I believe. I moved here

after my granddaughter already had her Quinceanera, so that is a shame. But I try to celebrate holidays a little like we did back home. I listen only to Spanish music and watch Spanish television (64 year old from Mexico).

A number of women, including most who were acculturated by choice, chose to maintain some selected traditional practices. They indicated that they do so out of a sense of nostalgia or wanting their children to experience some of their heritage:

> I like to cook, so I make a lot of the same meals that I prepare back in Mexico. I like my children to know where they come from but I want them to be Americans so I tell them about certain Mexican celebrations and stuff but we mostly celebrate American things (28 year old from Mexico).

> I make a lot of the foods from Mexico and I try to make my children aware of the traditions and their heritage" (38 year old from Mexico).

There were women, however, who may maintain one or two traditions, such as food, but expressed disdain for women who try to live similarly to how they lived in their countries of origin. They were categorized as being well acculturated by choice:

> I always say, why do these people do that? Even from my country. They do the same things they do back home, so why did they bother to come? (28 year old from El Salvador)

> When I get together with my friends, we all make different foods from our countries so we can try new things. When I can, I watch television in Spanish and listen to Spanish music. But the reality is that life here in the United States is so different, and we are able to do things differently than we could, or would, in Ecuador. So why should I try to live the same way here when the whole reason for coming here was to live differently? So

> many Latinos do that, they live the same way they would back home, and I don't understand it. Why do you bother coming if you're not going to change how you live? (56 year old from Ecuador)

Traditional Gender Roles

As previously stated, Hispanic culture has been shown to be overwhelmingly patriarchal, with the bulk of the power and control in the family and relationships given to the men (Gallardo, 2011). In general, those norms are discordant with the expectations and experiences of women raised in the United States. Women in this study responded and reacted to traditional gender roles and expectations in a variety of ways, and the choice of whether to accept or reject those ascribed roles emerged as a dominant theme in the study and in determining acculturative outcomes. Simply put, in traditional Hispanic households, females are perceived (by themselves and others) as *not having choices* (Lopez, 2013). If acculturation develops as the product of choices made, the autonomy (or lack thereof) assumed by the individual will greatly impact acculturative outcomes. Did the women in the study make their own decisions based on their wants and needs, or did they assign external loci of control and allow other forces to determine their paths?

A few women, categorized as being unacculturated by choice, embraced traditional gender roles and one expressed outright anger toward women who did not do the same:

> It was my duty to get married and if my father thought he was a good man, I had to accept it. He is my husband. I am his wife, and I do what I am supposed to do to care for him. He makes money so we can live (25 year old from Ecuador).

> My husband was good to me, but he had a problem. He drank a lot. He never beat me or our children, but that was a problem, a weakness. But men are entitled to drink if that is what they want to do, so I said nothing. I have always been a good daughter, and a good wife and mother. You have to listen to the men, and take care of them. That is the first thing. They take care of us by working so hard, so we must take care of them. As a mother, it is my job to teach my daughters how to be a good wife and mother for when they are older. God's intention for women was to serve their men and to serve Him by doing so. If you are in school or at a job, who is there at home to care for the family? I cook most of the meals for my son and his family, and take care of their home. His wife, she is lazy, but that is no reason for the house to be dirty. Also, she is not a good cook (64 year old from Mexico).

This participant went on to say, "I have to be glad for women here that they have more choices and they are able to go to school and get good jobs. But some women, young ones, they should be ashamed. They dress like prostitutes and act worse, having sex with so many men and not getting married! They never go to church and they do not respect their parents or themselves. They are not good women, they are not good daughters or good mothers. It makes me sad to see how women act here; they do not take care of their families like they should."

With women relegated to a subservient role and oppressed in many Hispanic families, there is the potential for domestic violence. In their countries of origin, several women stated that such violence would be unchecked and unpunished and that women had no protection from abuse. A number of women either passively enacted or simply

accepted traditional gender roles. Even amongst those women, who were categorized as unacculturated by choice, there was acknowledgement of and appreciation for opportunities afforded to females in the United States, including relative safety from male violence:

> Here you have rights. In El Salvador women will not speak up because there is no one there to listen (31 year old from El Salvador).

> In Ecuador women are sometimes not treated very nice. You cannot speak up if you're unhappy, because only men make the rules and the woman have to live with them. Here you have more rights (34 year old from Ecuador).

> I take care of him and when he needs something I do it. I am respectful and I listen to him so he won't get mad. I just want to be a good wife and mother. We are hoping for more children soon, so I need to focus on my family (25 year old from El Salvador).

Many women in the study rejected traditional gender roles; some did so with a great deal of passion and pride in their choice to take advantage of opportunities for women in the United States. Most were well acculturated by choice or reluctantly unacculturated:

> I have a driver's license and a car, a Masters degree, a job. I'm not married and I have no kids. I became a citizen two years ago, so I can vote in elections. It's great to be a woman here (28 year old from El Salvador).

> It's different being a woman here in the United States. Very different from being a woman in Mexico. Here, I can be much more independent. Well,

> here I had the power to divorce my husband. In Mexico I would have had to stay with him, even though he is not a nice man. You don't have the right to divorce your husband, really. But here, I could make the decision and he couldn't stop me. Here I can work without fear. I am over 65 years old. In my original country, I would not have been able to work at my job at this age. They don't like to see women working past 30 any way, you should be at home taking care of your children and man. But women who work in stores, and in the public, have to be young and pretty and always look good. So in my country, I would not have a job, and I would have to depend on my husband and children to support me and take care of me, which would give them all the control over my life. Here, you can be a woman, even an older woman, and work as much as you want to make the life you want. I think that's what makes this country great, that if you are willing to work hard you can find the opportunities to live a good life, no matter who or what you are! (66 year old from Mexico)

Participants reported that coming to the United States has helped to empower them as women and has helped them to learn their own strengths:

> Women can do so much more here. Women have abilities and the capacity to do so much more than they are allowed to do in Ecuador and other countries. They have so many skills, and are much stronger than men would like to admit. Stronger, I think, than women themselves like to admit. I think women are much stronger than men because they have to be. Women work in the home, outside the home. They raise children, take care of family. Men work at a job and then sit at home and do nothing, very often (56 year old from Ecuador).

> I was resolved to prove that these men were wrong about me. And that's what I did. I graduated with honors at the top of my class. That was the best way to show them. Them and the students like them, the white male

> students who thought we were below them. Many of those men left the program, and I was still there (44 year old from Mexico).

One woman, a 22-year-old from Mexico, in particular was very vocal about the cycle of teenage pregnancy in her country of origin and how she wanted to teach her daughter differently so she could break that cycle. However, some behaviors she is seeing from young women in the United States compelled her to offer some words of caution:

> It is easier being a woman alone here than it is in Mexico. In my country, men have all the power. Women have very few rights and are expected to become wives and mothers very early, and their job is to take care of the man, the children, the house. Later, to take care of their parents. Like I said, I wanted more than that for my baby. I became a mother early, but that was not my choice. I want her to have that choice. I love having more freedom, being able to work here, and go places alone, and make my own decisions. But some women take it too far. They come here and have all this new power over themselves, and they dress like prostitutes and flaunt themselves in front of men. You know what? They will end up with five children and no man, like they would have in Mexico anyway. So they haven't made a better life at all. Women need to appreciate that they have a better chance here, and work to use that chance.

Overall, even those women who adhere to traditional gender roles are aware of and acknowledge the enhanced opportunities available to women in the United States, as well as how that might impact the life experience of a women in a new culture. Most women who live in concert with these gender expectations tended to be geographically isolated in that they live in insular communities primarily inhabited by others of Hispanic

heritage, so there is consistency and constant reinforcement of cultural norms and expected roles in the community and the family.

Geographic Isolation

Many of the study participants lived in ethnic enclaves composed almost exclusively of people from Spanish-speaking countries. Within those communities, there are grocery stores, other shopping, health care, and services that cater primarily to people of Hispanic culture. For all intents and purposes, everything needed to sustain the lifestyle of a woman and her family is readily available within a relatively small geographic area, requiring little or no travel outside the boundaries of that neighborhood. In general, women who chose to either live outside ethnic enclaves or to experience the world outside them tended to be categorized as either acculturated by choice or reluctantly unacculturated, in that they made decisions that exposed them to more diverse life experiences.

Some participants take advantage of that access to all necessities and choose to rarely venture from their cultural cocoons:

> We shop at markets that sell things we like, and the people that work there are Latino. We all speak the same language, and that's good. Where we live, there are people from many countries, but we are all Latino (31 year old from Ecuador).

> I don't go outside my community much, so I don't talk too much with anybody who is not Hispanic. Me talking to you, that is kind of strange for me. Mostly because there are not too many people like you who speak Spanish, so I don't really have a reason to talk to people who are not like me. (22 year old from Mexico).

> My friends are Salvadorian and everywhere I go people are Hispanic. I don't want to do that; my husband says we are safe here. So why would I leave this area (25 year old from El Salvador)?

Other women chose to either live in more ethnically diverse neighborhoods or to leave their culturally insulated communities to shop, work, and partake in services. Most of them were categorized as well acculturated by choice or reluctantly unacculturated, and did so with the conscious goal of experiencing various aspects of the United States culture:

> I live in an apartment in a house...they are all American, all white people. They are all very nice; we all get along very well. The people who own the house are wonderful. They learned a little Spanish so we can talk a little bit, so we are all happy there (66 year old from Mexico).

> I wanted to be with different people. If I just wanted to be with Salvadorians, I would have stayed there, you know (29 year old from El Salvador)?

> I'm a teacher, and I became friendly with a bunch of the other students in the program. Plus I volunteer at the local animal shelter and I am friendly with the workers there also (28 year old from El Salvador).

Openness to Diversity

Hand-in-hand with the concept of geographic isolation is that of cultural isolation. Women in the study were categorized as either being open to (or welcoming of) sociocultural diversity or being resistant to it (or indifferent). Women considered as being open to diversity actively sought opportunities to expand their social networks to

include people of multiple cultures and backgrounds. One woman spoke of her fellow teachers and support staff at the school where she works:

> Oh, yes, everybody is different, as people and culturally. It's great (28 year old from El Salvador).

Another woman spoke of her experience in college here on Long Island:

> I love meeting new people and learning new things, so this was a perfect place for me. College in general, and college in New York in particular (44 year old from Mexico).

One participant, a 36-year-old from Ecuador, first traveled to France for a year after leaving her country of origin, and hopes to see more of the world throughout her life:

> I wanted to meet new kinds of people and learn about new customs. I wanted to learn about life outside my country, because that was very limited. I wanted to have friends all over the world.

Women who were not seeking diversity did not have much to say about it; they primarily live in insular ethnic neighborhoods and feel safe and comfortable in their culturally homogenous communities. Diversity was not a consideration or topic of interest for them.

Experiences with Discrimination

It is well documented that Hispanic immigrants are often targeted for violence and acts of discrimination. Here on Long Island, there have in the past several years

been numerous reports of hate crimes against Latinos; the most notorious being the murder of Marcelo Lucero in Patchogue in 2008. Less well known are other assaults and attacks – verbal and physical – on individuals throughout the county.

Women in this study who experienced discrimination shortly upon their arrival in the United States tended to then choose to be more geographically and culturally isolated upon settling; it appeared that early negative interaction with the host community compelled them to avoid future exposure to negative and potentially harmful situations:

> Actually I got the feeling that you don't have to treat me like a human being. How can I say this? It's like you see someone ahead of you with power and you have that face, Hispanic, and you don't feel comfortable in front of that person because you feel that fear (51 year old from El Salvador).

> Many people here are not very nice to people like me. They treat us badly; they say mean things and treat us like we are less. They threaten us with the police and immigration if we do not obey them and do what they say. Why would I want to know people like this? Also, it is kind of good to be with people who can understand you and know what life is like. We all help each other, so there is no need to spend too much time with other kinds of people here, especially if they act like we are not welcome here. (38 year old from Ecuador).

It seems that these women were made to feel early on in their new lives that they were not welcome in the host culture. Nearly all women who identified as well acculturated by choice or reluctantly unacculturated reported experiences of discrimination.

> Sometimes, when you leave this community, people are not so nice. White people, black people. They look at you a certain way and you know they are thinking bad things about you. They talk to each other and you know it's about you, maybe they call me names. It doesn't feel safe, it's like they are looking for a reason to make trouble. And if something happens I can't win, because I'm not here legally. So I have no rights here, and nobody will protect me. The police here, they are not trained to help people who are being treated badly. They are trained to treat people like me worse because we are Hispanic. They do not help, they only hurt. So we have to be very careful (24 year old from Mexico).

The visibility of ethnic enclaves seems to provide a basis for stereotyping immigrants according to their geographic locations or places of residence. This is seen not only among non-Hispanic people, but community stereotypes seem to be inherently accepted even by members of the Latina population, who may exhibit horizontal hostility based on residence:

> A lot of people think all Latinas are like those women who walk around in Brentwood. They think they are uneducated, ignorant, living on the government. Some are, many are, but not all. But on the surface someone cannot see the difference, so I guess they assume I'm like that. They look at me, I see them talking. It used to bother me. But now, not so much. My husband and I, we bought a house in Lake Grove two years ago. There aren't too many people there who are not white. At first, the neighbors seemed upset that we moved in, but they know me now. And we all get along. People need to stop making assumptions about people and get to know them, to see who they really are (29 year old from El Salvador).

Other women work in companies or facilities in which diversity may be encouraged, but not actually present or actively sought. Being a de facto ethnic minority within the workplace can result in discrimination in the place of employment, both by coworkers and patrons:

> There are people, more now than there used to be, who just don't like Latinos. They make it obvious that they don't like you, and it's not because of you as a person. It's because you are Latino, you are different. They like to be with and talk to certain types of people and nobody different, and if you are not like them they speak badly of you and treat you like you are less than them. I work in a school district where most of the people are white, so I see this a lot. Thank God I am here legally, I am a citizen, so I don't have to be afraid of somebody trying to get me arrested or deported, or in trouble for being Latina. I let them talk badly because I know I am a better person (56 year old from Ecuador).

Women who did live in insular ethnic communities, most of whom were classified as being unacculturated by choice, expressed awareness that living in a culturally homogenous neighborhood offers some protection from discrimination on the basis of being Hispanic:

> No, not really, because I only do things around my neighborhood and everyone is Spanish there (25 year old from Ecuador).

> No, never. I only stay here, in this area, and everybody is like me. You are one of the only people I have spoken to who is not Hispanic (64 year old from Mexico).

> No, I don't think so. I am always around other people from El Salvador and Colombia, so why would they treat me badly (25 year old from El Salvador)?

Civic Engagement

Women in the study were asked to discuss their view of the United States government, current immigration policies, and pending changes in those policies. For many women, it seemed that their legal status is the basis of many of their acculturative goals and choices, and legal status is tied closely into laws regulating immigration.

Several women expressed having little or no knowledge of potential change in policies, and indicated that they were not particularly interested in becoming more aware of them. It appeared that they did not see the relevance of government action in their lives:

> A little, because my son talks about it. He says maybe he and his wife can get their green cards. It would be good, I think, but for me it's not so important. It's good for them because they are younger, but my life would not change much (64 year old from Mexico).

> Really, I don't understand much about that. Maybe then my husband could get a better job? I don't know. My life is good now, I think. (25 year old from El Salvador).

These tended to be the women who were unacculturated by choice or reluctantly acculturated; this was yet another facet of the host culture with which they choose not to interact.

Other women had some rudimentary understanding of policies and some views on the government and its activity. They understood that changes in immigration law could potentially benefit them and improve their ability to achieve acculturative goals, but did not feel compelled to gain more than a superficial understanding of the political process or underlying issues impacting policy change:

> I hear the news and read the papers, and I know they are talking about a law that can help us get our papers (31 year old from Ecuador).
>
> I don't know much. I know your President is a black man, and that makes people angry, I think. I know in your government, everybody is always fighting so nothing gets done. It does not matter what he wants to do. Nothing ever happens (25 year old from Ecuador).
>
> I hear that the President is trying to change immigration laws, and that is a wonderful thing. I think he is a good man, and the government is good because he is in charge. This country, the people in it, depend a lot upon the work of Latinos. So if Latinos could be more welcome here, if they could work more and pay taxes and be here legally, things could work so much better (66 year old from Mexico).

Most of the women who were well acculturated by choice had a fairly good understanding of pending policy changes and were able to articulate clear opinions on the government and its functioning:

> I think that, as long as the government is fighting itself, it is a joke. Everything they say is a joke. I think if the reform actually happened, it would be wonderful and change a lot of lives in a good way, but I do not believe it will ever actually happen. Not while there is all this conflict. The President, he seems to be a good man and want to make good changes

that will help society, but he really doesn't have the power to make any of these changes (29 year old from El Salvador).

I watch those things very carefully, because they would impact so many of the people I serve at the health center. I think the idea of them is wonderful, the DREAM Act, these new policies to let people be here legally. I just don't think anything will ever come of them while our government and society are so divided. You can't make changes work when so many people are against them, so a lot would have to change in this country to make these reforms work (44 year old from Mexico).

Women in this category seemed to have a deeper understanding of underlying sociopolitical currents impacting changes in immigration policy. They also had a sense of economic forces involved as well as large-scale effects that changes might have on the immigrant community:

We are here, we work hard and support so many businesses. Why would the government not want to make it easier for us to do that work? Why don't people understand that we want to do the right thing, and pay taxes, and work legally for fair pay? I don't have health insurance, I don't get food stamps or welfare money. I just work very hard and try to live a good life. It is not easy to live as an illegal immigrant, and I wish people understood that we want to live the right way and do the right thing. The government keeps us here illegally, not us (38 year old from Ecuador).

The government? I think the President is a good man and is trying to make the right changes. Positive changes for Latinos, for other people in need. He sees that things need to change. Like for immigrants, I think he realizes that immigrants are a strength of this country and always have been. We work hard, so hard, and that work usually is not recognized. I think it would just make it easier for Latinos to live here, to work here.

> They would have freedom to develop and use skills, to make a better life for themselves and their families and to contribute more to society. Many immigrants here cannot fulfill their potential because they are living in fear and working for very little money, living in poverty (56 year old from Ecuador).

Overall, women who had the goal of becoming well acculturated and integrating themselves into the United States culture chose to make themselves aware of what was going on in terms of immigration policy change and the process by which those changes are made, as well as barriers to that change happening.

Barriers to Fulfillment of Acculturative Goals

Women who are considered reluctantly acculturated or reluctantly unacculturated are so defined because they are currently unable to fulfill their "goals" of being either acculturated or unacculturated. There is some barrier to achievement of these goals. All women who were reluctantly unacculturated identified their legal status as the primary barrier, as they were all undocumented at the time of the interview. Not having their papers, in their perception or in reality, inhibits their abilities to make choices that would integrate them more into the host culture:

> When you are an undocumented immigrant you are not from here and you are not from there. You are in the middle. This country is nice, they have very nice things here. I would say thank you for a lot of things here (50 year old from Ecuador).

One participant, a 51-year-old woman from Ecuador, is in the process of fighting the legal system. She is married to a Caucasian American man, has a child with him,

and lives with his family. She was arrested twice for illegal entry and served time in a penitentiary. She has a felony conviction, but is in the process of trying to get that overturned as her public defender at that time spoke no Spanish and she spoke no English. She expressed a number of hopes and plans for the future, but is unable to act on them until her legal issues are resolved. She lives in constant fear of being removed from her family and deported.

On the other hand, women categorized as being reluctantly acculturated have integrated into the host culture more deeply than they would like. They feel that the choice of whether or not to immerse themselves to the extent they have in the United States culture was taken from them out of some practical need or imperative; that is, they are forced to interact with those outside their own culture out of necessity but would prefer not to.

One such woman was previously discussed. She was forced to stay when her very young son became extremely ill while on vacation and was hospitalized. She was given the option at that time of going back to Ecuador without him and thus relinquishing him to Child Services or of staying while his treatment was completed. She and her husband stayed and are now here illegally. They left in Ecuador a good life in which they had a high socioeconomic status. Subsequently, they had another child. She is compelled to stay here and interact with the school system and other institutions for her children, but she is unhappy with the influence of “American” children on hers and overall does not like most facets of the United States culture.

Two participants in this category work in hotels and are forced to interact with higher-level personnel as well as the customers, who they identify as “mostly white.”

They have learned English as a result of this continued exposure, but poor treatment and discrimination at work have led to a dislike of “Americans” and an expressed desire to avoid interaction with those outside their culture whenever possible. A woman from Mexico who works cleaning houses expressed similar sentiments:

> I work cleaning people's houses, but I like staying in my neighborhood as much as I can. We all understand each other there. When I'm at someone's house working, they talk to me like I am stupid. In my neighborhood, there is nothing like that because we're all Hispanic (38 year old from Mexico).

Peasant Classification and Traditional Family Roles

In several cases, a distinction can be seen in the acculturative status and category of the women in the study based on the type of work done by the participant and her family in her country of origin. Those women who were raised in “peasant” communities (Poster, 1979) reliant on farming and agriculture were, in most cases, older women and were categorized as unacculturated by choice. Within these communities, as previously discussed, the life trajectories of women were considered to be the responsibility of the village and were assigned an external locus of control, with ultimate power given to the will of God. As the word of God was generally disseminated by men, the autonomy of these women was limited and they were raised to have confidence in patriarchal societal structures.

Therefore, women in the study who came from poor farming communities tended to adhere most closely to the traditional cultural norms that reflected these patriarchal values. A few had arranged marriages, and most accepted or embraced

traditional gender roles and values reflecting the dominant importance of home, family (particularly men), and spirituality. One participant, a 64-year-old woman from Mexico, reflected on how the men in her family treated women:

> My father and grandfather were both difficult men, very strict. They were not bad if things went well with the crops and everybody did what they were told, but they would beat us if the crops went bad and we made them angry. We just tried to leave them alone.

When asked to describe her mother and her response to such treatment, she responded:

> She was just a wonderful woman, very loving and Godly. She knew how to manage my father and grandfather when they were angry, and she took care of us all so well even when we had very little. A very good, strong woman.

This participant was married to a man chosen by her father and the father of her husband at age 16; her husband was ten years older. She was a mother at age 17. She expresses disappointment in women in the United States because she feels they are not fulfilling God's role for them as wives and mothers, and she lives as she would in her country of origin.

Conversely, many of the younger women in the study, who tended to be categorized as well acculturated by choice or reluctantly unacculturated, did not come from agricultural backgrounds. They and their families worked in offices, factories, tourism, or fishing and, in many cases, were considered to be of a moderate to high socioeconomic class. These women were less religious, tended to reject traditional gender roles, and embraced new freedoms found in the United States. These

distinctions closely resembled family structures outlined in Poster's (1979) theory on the family, in which he described differences in family structures in historic societies based on differences in socioeconomic status, culture, and industry.

Empowerment of Latina Immigrants – Perspectives from Within

A few of the study participants spoke at length of their concerns for the Latina immigrant community and their unique needs. There were three women in particular who were in the unique positions of being part of this community while also being advocates for their community. Amongst the participants were a woman from Mexico and two from Ecuador, all of whom worked in a local community health center, as well as at a local hospital; both locations serving populations that are largely Hispanic. Many of the patients are women, some of who became study participants themselves.

The three aforementioned participants were concerned with the reliance of immigrants on informal "referrals" for services, meaning that women learned of available resources and sources of assistance in their communities by word-of-mouth from other women. They felt there were not enough formal sources of information and assistance, undocumented women were too frightened to seek out resources on their own, and many of the women in the communities lacked sufficient education to take advantage of available opportunities:

> Because you're doing this study for Latina women, its like when you don't have the information that can help us Latinas to move on in life because what you can see is that most of the women, Latina women, the self esteem is too low and you have the feeling that you can not do anything by yourself and move on. You need to stay right there. Sometimes you don't see any choices because nobody say anything or teach you and

> since this is a different culture you don't know many things. You start learning through experiences and failures. That's my question, where can you go to learn and get orientation to learn these? What I can tell you is for the undocumented there are a lot of fears… It's like living in another world. I feel they need a lot of help. A lot (51 year old from El Salvador).

This participant quote illustrates the fact that some women within the community being studied are aware of the needs of the community. They also see opportunities for improvement and feel that there are ways to empower women through education and connection to resources. This participant demonstrates the belief that, given information, choices, and the power to make them, women may decide to change their lives for the better. However, she feels that lack of information and perceptions of powerlessness limit the ability of women to make choices for positive change.

Having described my findings and illustrated my theoretical model of acculturation based on choice, I will now discuss implications of those findings within several dimensions of the social work profession.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

This study offers a number of implications for theory, social work education, practice, future research, and policy. It also contributes to the building of theories, as well as the ongoing professional discourse around oppression of vulnerable populations and social justice. The emergent model of the model of acculturation of Latina immigrants identifies specific factors involved in that process as well as provides insight into the contexts in which women in this population make choices that impact their lived experiences in a new culture. In consideration of the "goals" of successful acculturation as previously discussed, I assessed, based on the experiences related by participants, whether they were "successful" or "unsuccessful" in the fulfillment of those goals. The degree of success was shown to be dependent on their perspectives of their experience in their nations of origin, the experience of immigration itself, and the experience of their lives in the host nation, all in the context of the individuals' acculturative goals for themselves and their sense of autonomy and locus of control. In addition, it adds necessary empirically-based knowledge to a critical topic for social work, in which there is a significant gap in knowledge.

Implications of This Study

This study brings to light several important implications. It contributes to the theoretical foundation of the social work profession around the concept of acculturation. It also provides possible direction for social work education in the realm of cultural competency, practice, and research focused on social justice for a significant and vulnerable population within our society. Implications for practice include the need for

tools that better enable assessment and intervention around sensitive cultural issues and cultural barriers to seeking and utilizing available resources. Research implications include the need for more empowering studies on the strengths and resiliency of marginalized communities and recruiting study participants from hidden sub-populations. Policy implications include the need for new legislation to facilitate the reunions of families separated by immigration, and legislation that provides a path to legal status for those already living in the United States undocumented.

Acculturation Versus Assimilation

As was previously briefly discussed, there is a tendency both in academia and in the general societal context for the concepts of acculturation and assimilation to be used interchangeably. To do so undermines the meaning of acculturation. Acculturation is the process by which the immigrant and the host culture interact and adapt in relation to each other. There is evolution on both parts, with the individual (and the family, and community of co-migrants with similar backgrounds and acculturative goals) changing to reflect selected norms, values, and traditions of the new culture. Likewise, the host culture changes on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels to reflect new norms, values, and traditions introduced by the newcomers. This is reflected in popular culture, the media, slang and vernacular, as well as in cultural conflict and policy decisions.

Assimilation, however, refers to an entirely different process. It is one-sided, and involves only change and evolution on the part of the immigrant. The concept of assimilation (as reflected in theories and literature on Linear Assimilation, previously

discussed) is the process by which the individual enters the new culture and progressively abandons the norms, values, and traditions with which they were raised in favor of those of the host culture. The assumption in assimilation is that the ultimate ”goal” of someone entering a new culture is for him or her to alter his or her behaviors, appearance, and perceptions to fit in by identifying in every way only with the host culture.

The study participants overwhelmingly grasped the disconnect between these two concepts, even if such was not explicitly verbalized. There was an overarching sentiment of preserving traditional cultural practices, even if only food. Most of the women, including those who were well acculturated by choice, chose to maintain some of these practices and some indicated that they intended to educate their children and grandchildren and work to instill pride in their cultural heritage. While some women did express frustration over those who live in the United States exactly as they would in their countries of origin, they also acknowledged the value of preserving their “home cultures” to a certain extent. Not one participant stated as an acculturative goal that of abandoning all aspects of her culture, or that she felt that should be the goal of acculturation. One explanation for the broad use of the term “assimilation” interchangeably with “acculturation” may be a product of ethnocentrism on the part of researchers and academics. Another possible explanation is the ambiguity and lack of agreement over the definitions of the two terms. The model of acculturation presented in this study illustrates the process of acculturation without value judgments or researcher expectations or bias.

Theoretical Implications

As discussed in Chapter Three, the goal of grounded theory research is to build theory. This goal was achieved in this study through the construction of a model depicting the process by which Latina female immigrants in Suffolk County become acculturated through a series of choices they make and their perceptions of the choices available to them. This study contributes to the collective understanding in social work of the meaning and process of acculturation by providing the experiences and realities of those women adapting to a new sociocultural environment, in their own words.

Furthermore, in attempting to develop theoretical understanding of immigrant populations, this study demonstrates the importance of linking trajectories that occur in immigrants' adopted cultures as centrally linked to the cultural and socioeconomic contexts from which they come in their countries of origin. Without incorporating this linkage, theoretical analyses of immigrant experience will tend to miss significant explanatory factors necessary for in depth understanding of immigrants' experience of acculturation.

The emergent model of acculturation through choice expands on Berry's (1997) and Cohen's (2010) models in several ways. First, it allows for fluidity between acculturate categories over time. While the two traditional models effectively allow researchers to "assign" immigrants to a static category and define that as their terminal acculturative identity, the new model is based on choices throughout the individual's lifespan. Therefore, different choices made, or changing perceptions of those choices, may alter the category in which the individual fits at any given time.

Second, traditional theories are rooted in the researchers' perceptions of the immigrants' characteristics, whereas the expanded theory is based on the spoken experiences and perceptions of the individual herself. Determining factors in the BAM and Cohen models are almost exclusively external, such as level of interaction with the co-migrant community, while factors in the emergent model are primarily internal and based on perceptions of autonomy and choice.

Third, the traditional models do not account for the uniqueness of each culture and characteristics of that culture that may impact acculturation, such as religion, gender roles, and family structures. Finally, the emergent theory of acculturation accounts for civic engagement and understanding of policy and political impact on the immigrant's life experience.

Feminist Theory – Brief Overview

Feminist theoretical perspectives on social work focus on explaining the oppression of women in most societies. In social work, this is extremely important because it helps us to understand women's social roles and positions. Feminist theory is concerned both with radical social change and the more individualistic and collective development and personal and social growth of women (Payne, 2005). Feminism is rooted in the idea that women are oppressed by patriarchal social structures, which give privileges to and empower men at the expense of women. This serves to disenfranchise, disempower, and devalue the experiences of women. Within this theoretical framework, power relations put women at a disadvantage in society and reject or devalue their competencies, experiences, perceptions, and values.

According to most versions of feminist theory, women's lives must be understood and valued as separate and different from those of men, particularly in contexts where women are at risk of being oppressed by particularly deep-rooted cultural standards, such as in Hispanic cultures. Thus, feminist theory lends itself well as a lens through which to examine the data from this study and develop a new theoretical framework for acculturation of Latina immigrants.

Chicana Feminism

The original definition of a Chicana is a Mexican-American female who is raised in the United States. A Chicana "has minority status in her own land even though she is, in part, indigenous to the Americas and a member of one of the largest (majority) ethnic groups in the United States. She is a woman whose life is too often characterized by poverty, racism, and sexism, not only in the dominant culture, but also within her own culture (Moya, 2001)."

In the 1960s, the term "Chicana" was picked up by a generation of radical Latina feminists to signify their unique cultural identity. This called for acknowledgement and pride in their Mexican heritage, and demanded that white America acknowledge historic and persistent patterns of racial inequality in political, legal, and socioeconomic opportunities for Mexican-Americans. Chicana feminism is now used in application to any woman of Hispanic heritage, rather than being exclusive to women of Mexican birth or descent. A Chicana identity rejects the idea that the Hispanic heritage must be denied in order to "fit in" or fit cultural standards. Women raised in another culture should strive to live in a way that honors both cultures (Gallardo, 2011).

Additionally, Chicana feminists have made significant critiques of the patriarchal Latino culture in general for subordinating the needs and concerns of women within an ideology of "familia," the expectation of the needs of the family and husband coming first before the needs of the woman herself. Gallardo (2011) conceptualizes Chicana feminism as a critical framework that examines inequalities along lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality as they affect women of Hispanic descent in the United States. Chicana feminism, also referred to as Xicanism, is seen as an ideology based on the rejection of the traditional gender roles of a Latina. This theory challenges the stereotypes of women across the lines of gender, ethnicity, class, race, and sexuality.

According to Moya (2001), one problem encountered by Chicanas as they attempt to expand their gender roles and break out of traditional cultural molds is resistance from within their own culture. Men see this evolution as a threat to their own power and make efforts to suppress the growth and empowerment of the women. They accuse Chicanas who advocate for greater autonomy for women of betraying their people, families, and traditions. Economic conditions compel men to encourage women to become “liberated” enough to earn money outside the home at menial jobs, yet they still want the women’s primary purpose and role to revolve around the house and family (Moya, 2001).

Implications for Social Work Education

Based on the expressed lack of positive interactions with social work practitioners verbalized by participants in the study, it would seem that there is a need for enhanced focus on cultural competency and attention to oppressed and vulnerable

ethnic communities during the educational process. Numerous researchers (Boyle & Springer, 2001; Allen-Meares, 2008; de Anda, 2008) in the field of cultural competency in social work expressed their firm beliefs that the goal of mastering culturally competent practice should be a mandatory aspect of every part of social work education, starting with BSW students. Additionally, it was stated that there should be a process of ongoing training and continuing education in the subject throughout the span of the professional career, as communities and their characteristics evolve and diversify (Allen-Meares, 2008). Interestingly, in a study by Liu et al (2004), it was shown that much of the anxiety that students have about research is related to potential interaction with diverse populations, and students exposed to more training on cultural diversity and competency were more amenable to and likely to pursue further education in social work research. Therefore, it would seem that if social work students experienced more focused curriculum on diversity and cultural competencies during the education process, they may seek opportunities to experience additional training in those subjects and have more drive to contribute to the pool of social work knowledge in culture through social justice-driven research.

De Anda (2008) asserted her belief that social work students must receive a multicultural education in which they are exposed to adequate content on racism, oppression, social identity and privilege. They should be pushed to engage in a demanding curriculum involving both learning about diverse cultures and confronting their own experiences and opinions regarding oppression and privilege. There must be compulsion to explore the true meaning of social justice in the context of cultural diversity and multicultural needs and beliefs. Because this level of critical thinking can

incite difference-based tensions within the classroom, faculty must also be trained on how best to mediate those issues effectively while allowing students to express themselves appropriately (de Anda, 2008). Only through exposure to prevailing cultural stereotypes can students understand the impact of those stereotypes and how they may subvert and undermine even well-intentioned interventions. Of course, understanding and acknowledging stereotypes, while potentially uncomfortable, may also help the student to gain awareness of barriers facing minority clients in the field. A number of participants in this study verbalized such stereotypes of Latina women and how non-Hispanic individuals use those internalized assumptions to cause harm.

When teaching introductory courses on cultural competency, it is necessary to consider the professor and the class demographics, course organization, and course content and modes of presentation of potentially sensitive or provocative material (de Anda, 2008; Haynes and Singh, 1992). The teacher should be an individual who has undergone extensive training in cultural competency and methods for effectively working with people of diverse cultures. However, this should be a two-way learning process, with the teacher also willing to relinquish the role of leader and allow students to be experts in their experiences with issues of diversity and oppression. It is imperative that the class be composed a diverse body of students, as it contributes greatly to the potential learning experience. The most effective class format in this study was large-scale lecture hall format followed by smaller discussion groups (de Anda, 2008). Swank et al (2001) conducted a study of BSW students using a questionnaire related to issues of diversity and pretest-posttest methods. They found that attitudes of prejudice were significantly reduced after students completed a

semester of a ”social diversity” class. Therefore, in a society of ever-increasing size and diversity, future social workers should receive intensive education at all levels of schooling regarding diversity and cultural competency.

Van Soest (1994) conducted a two-phase exploratory field study on MSW students and their learning experiences with a new course on cultural diversity and oppression. She reported that students, while at times upset and disconcerted by conflicts arising on the course of discussion of diverse life experiences, found that this course enriched their education and understanding of the diverse world around them and, in fact, many pursued additional education or training in issues of cultural diversity and cultural competence. Ronnau (1994) reinforced the need for cultural competence training within social work education and stated that, while all accredited programs contain the minimum amount of such education, it must be increased to keep issues of diversity and diversity-based oppression as a concern of paramount importance to future practitioners. Congress (1992) stated similar concerns but also focused on the ethical imperative for professors to both teach with a multicultural perspective and guard against their own tendencies to practice discrimination and paternalism toward their students.

Another concern related to training of multicultural social workers is that the majority of students and professionals are monolingual and, without the use of interpreters, can only do work with those who speak the same language (Engstom & Min, 2004). Students from diverse ethnic backgrounds are often inherently at an advantage because, in most cases, they can fluently speak both their native languages and English. Engstrom and Min (2004) highlight the difficulties within social service

systems when the practitioner and the client cannot speak a common language, as well as the complications and pitfalls of using interpreters, in which workers default to stereotypical beliefs and assumptions to make decisions in the absence of effective and accurate communication. Thus, they set forth the need to encourage, if not mandate, training in foreign languages so as not to put clients with limited English proficiency (LEP) at a disadvantage and allow them to get the most from available interventions. This is accomplished by showing the advantages that bilingual workers have in effectively helping their clients. As a bilingual social worker, my language proficiency has allowed me to work efficiently with Latino clients in my practice in addition to effective interviewing while conducting this study. Being a researcher who spoke the language of my participants allowed me to overcome multiple barriers to collecting data, in addition to facilitating my transcription of recordings and my connection to the raw data.

It is important to examine the work of Engstrom and Okamura (2008), who examined standards of multicultural education in social work in comparison to the increasingly diverse nature of society. They call for a reexamination and total overhaul of the social services system, methods of social work practice, and social work curricula in response to the fact that so many of those served are members of differing cultures and "across-the-board" methods, guidelines, and techniques are not valid when those in need of help are "all over the board." In the absence of this complete transformation of the field of social work, they introduce the concept of a new field of specialization in the profession, in which practitioners acquire knowledge of immigration laws and issues as well as advanced multicultural practice. They attribute mainstream outmoded curricula,

techniques, and theory to the fact that social work as it exists developed in a historical context and without regard for the diverse needs of immigrant populations (Engstrom & Okamura, 2008).

Implications for Practice (Micro, Mezzo, Macro)

The majority of the women in the study related their experiences with encountering a “learning curve” upon entering their new culture. They became reliant on other women, who had once been new to the country themselves, to guide them to available resources and provide insights into the practicalities of life in their new communities. As those women acting as guides were, themselves, unaware of many services and resources available through various organizations and agencies in the community, they were unable to impart knowledge of them to the newcomers. Therefore, sole reliance on informal networks of co-migrants to provide knowledge of the new culture limited the ability of participants to avail themselves of all resources available.

Social workers practicing with immigrants and within the immigrant community should make themselves aware of the needs of the community (from the perspective of their client systems) and of resources available to address those needs. In the pursuit of social justice, social workers should not depend on members of immigrant populations to come to them seeking help; these individuals may either be unaware of the assistance that social workers can provide or, for various reasons, hesitant to seek help. There is a responsibility to reach out to oppressed people and their communities and to make them aware that assistance is available to them. This could involve a wide

range of interventions from individual meetings to community organizing, from providing direct services to providing linkages to community organizations to social action.

Social workers should also possess awareness of sociocultural barriers to accessing resources for immigrants, such as legal status, fear, resistance from within the community, and resistance from within the family. Many women in the study expressed the belief that there were not many services or resources available to them because they were undocumented. Fear over their legal status being disclosed and the possibility of deportation prevented many women from interacting with people outside their own insulated cultural communities. As this fear was one that was bred within the community itself and perpetuated through anecdotes and observations, women came to believe that needs and difficulties should only be addressed within the community and within the family, avoiding the intervention of outsiders. In addition, per statements to me given either pre- or post-interview, several women in the study were discouraged from seeking assistance, if not forbidden to do so, by men within their families and other women perpetuating patriarchal power structures. Understanding of these sociocultural barriers to accessing resources is essential to social workers practicing with members of the Latino immigrant community, and true understanding of these factors can only be attained by starting "where the client is at" and asking them about their beliefs, fears, and understandings. This is more difficult when working with individuals living in relative cultural isolation.

An important factor that influenced the isolation of participants was concern over their reception by those already living in the host culture, the "Americans." From the experiences of the research participants, it can be determined that women in the study

who experienced discrimination early in their time in the new culture tended to choose a life in the new culture that provided a cushion and some protection from further such treatment. Further, it can be inferred that women in the study who decided to live in a way that exposes them to diverse people were more likely to experience discrimination in the new culture. Therefore, women who experience this treatment yet choose to continue interacting with those outside the Hispanic culture do so because, in their view, the benefits of life experiences in a multicultural community or setting sufficiently offset the cost of hostility and bigotry. Social workers practicing with diverse client systems should be aware of the dynamics between the host culture and the clients that impact their ability or desire to interacts with those outside their culture, and how that impacts service delivery and utilization.

Implications for Future Social Work Research

The Need for Qualitative, Empowering Research

As previously stated, there is currently a dearth of qualitative research in social work, and in the social sciences in general, focusing on the experiences and perceptions of Latina immigrants. The bulk of existing research on this population is quantitative and inquiries are primarily concerned with health outcomes and issues of drug use, poverty, and crime. While the findings of these studies are certainly of value in that they indicate areas of need for intervention and programming, they can also

serve to reinforce cultural stereotypes. When research is not balanced, a population or community can come to be identified according to the perceived weaknesses or deficits identified through existing studies. Therefore, Latina immigrants are often portrayed as being impoverished and uneducated, as having poor health literacy and outcomes, as having large families and being dependent on government resources for survival (Reyna et al, 2013).

In their study on the impact of cultural stereotypes on attitudes toward immigration policy, Reyna et al (2013) found that seeing Latinos and other immigrant groups as lower class predicted negative attitudes toward them and support for punitive immigration policies. The researchers found that attitudes toward many other groups, such as Poles, Chinese, and Canadians, were more polarized; those surveyed felt either positively or negatively toward these cultural groups and their feelings about immigration of the groups were similarly polarized. However, their findings for Latinos were unique in that there were attitudes of either negativity or ambivalence, with those expressing negative sentiment relating stereotypical views of Latinos. Those with ambivalent feelings expressed sentiments of pity for Latinos, seeing them as exploited for cheap labor and not in control of their own place in the societal hierarchy. Overall, few respondents in the study expressed positive views of Latino immigrants that would indicate support for immigration policies benefitting this group.

Were the findings of Reyna et al (2013) to be generalized to the larger society, it is evident that stereotypical views, as reinforced through research and the pressure to carry out evidence-based practice, certainly have the potential to influence policies that impact the community of Latino immigrants in the United States. Therefore, it is

essential to balance the wealth of existing quantitative research on Latina immigrants with qualitative studies that allow the voices and perspectives of participants to be heard, that are empowering for this vulnerable group, and that have the potential to focus on perceived strengths as opposed to perceived deficits.

The Need for Improved Recruitment Methodology

As described in Chapter Three of this dissertation, I initially experienced a great deal of difficulty in recruiting participants for my study. I would attribute this to potential participants feeling fear or distrust for my motivations in studying them and their community, as I was an individual not from their culture. I was representing a large academic institution and planning to ask them questions about their lives and experiences. Several participants expressed their dislike of being audiorecorded for reasons of legal status, and others indicated that it is not the norm in their culture to be open about life experiences with those from outside their culture and community. This perception echoes findings by Haack et al (2104) in their study on the recruitment of Latino individuals for research. The researchers stated "difficulty recruiting and retaining Latino participants in clinical research may contribute to the limited number of studies addressing the disparities that exist between Latino and Caucasian families in our country" (p. 410).

Haack et al (2014) identified several strategies for effective research with Latino families, but their sample was composed solely of families with children. They were able to attain participants by identifying possible benefits for the children in the family, and they used cultural modifications to retain the participants for the length of the study.

These included involvement of the church, potential benefit to the community and, to a small degree, monetary compensation. In short, they tailored their recruitment and retention strategies to the particular characteristics of each participating family.

Wallace and Bartlett (2012) identify Latina females as a vulnerable population in need of further study, and outline some of the sociocultural barriers to recruiting these individuals for research participation and strategies for overcoming barriers. These strategies are building trust, building familiarity and visibility, use of racially and culturally similar researchers, understanding the environmental context, and convenience. They identify as a definitive barrier the presence of *machismo* within the Latino culture and the impact that patriarchal upbringing has on the recruitment of women for research.

I experienced the impact of *machismo* myself firsthand, as men in the community reading the recruitment flyers for my study expressed reluctance to allow women in their families to participate. Several women in my study mentioned before the interview that their husbands or brothers had not wanted them to participate. The reactions of Latina immigrants to my recruitment methods, and the supporting literature on difficulty in recruiting participants from this cultural population, indicate that additional studies should be done to develop more efficient research methods for recruiting members of immigrant sub-populations, who are currently underrepresented in the knowledge base of social work research.

Implications for Policy

A Pathway to Legal Status for Current Immigrants

A number of the participants in this study identified their undocumented legal status as a primary barrier to successful acculturation. This status and the fear associated with it served to keep women hidden and isolated in their ethnic enclaves in several ways. Several women expressed reluctance to interact with people outside their own culture out of concern for their status being disclosed and resulting legal consequences. Deportation is a common fear amongst undocumented immigrants (Brabeck et al, 2011) and those with anti-immigrant sentiment use this fear as a tool to further oppress this population. In their study on Latino immigration and deportation experiences, Brabeck et al (2011) state that the United States system of deportation and its recent escalated use have profound implications for the integrity and well-being of immigrant families. A central finding that emerged from their study was that experiences of deportation must be viewed and understood within the context of status-related risks to undocumented individuals and their families.

Cosby et al (2012) conducted a study on public support for deportation of Latino immigrants on the premise that Hispanic and Latino immigrants, as the largest and most visible immigrant group, have become the "face of immigration'" (p. 88) and the center of debate for reform of immigration policy in the United States. They state that an understanding of public support for immigration policies is rooted in an understanding of

US perceptions about the merits of both documented and undocumented Hispanic immigration.

In the study by Cosby et al (2012), ethnic prejudice and the societal perception of economic competition were found to be significantly related to support for deportation in the face of alternative legal options. Majority support for deportation over other types of repercussions was found among conservatives, moderates, Republicans, and Independents, and moderate support for deportation as punishment for illegal immigration was even seen among liberals and Democrats. During the recent economic crisis, perceived economic competition and attitudes of prejudice, along with belief in cultural stereotypes, were dominant influences on deportation preferences. Subsequently, deportation appears to have become a mainstream, default policy option (Cosby et al, 2012) and undocumented immigrants, such as many of the women in my study, isolate themselves against that possibility or experience fear on a daily basis that they themselves will be deported.

Brabeck et al (2011) referenced a study done by the National Council of La Raza (NCLR, 2007), the largest US Latino Civil Rights and advocacy organization. This organization studied three communities where large-scale workplace raids by government agencies had occurred, resulting in the deportation of hundreds of undocumented Latino immigrants. In the immediate aftermath of the raid, a total of 500 children, mostly US-born citizens, were temporarily or permanently separated from parents and guardians. The communities within which these raids occurred fell into chaos, and the resulting impact of these raids and deportations for children and families

included symptoms of trauma, fear, isolation, and depression, family fragmentation, and extreme economic hardship from loss of income (NCLR, 2007).

The potential for deportation is particularly threatening for families of mixed legal status. When the child is a US-born citizen and a parent is undocumented, the parent is forced to decide whether to leave their child behind or to uproot the child from its life and familiar community (Hawthorne, 2007). Individuals who have not been detained or deported also experience a chronic state of vulnerability and insecurity of living in the United States illegally. This has negative effects on both emotional and physical health and can impact the acculturation of the immigrant (Cavazos-Rehg et al, 2007). One participant in my study is a woman from Ecuador with a young son born in the United States. She is married to a native-born man and was arrested near the Canadian border while on vacation with her husband, son, and his family. She served jail time and is facing the possibility of deportation and separation from her family. Since her release from jail, she has isolated herself from the world outside her home and family and has been diagnosed with anxiety, depression, and PTSD related to her imprisonment and legal issues. The fear of separation from loved ones due to deportation is exacerbated by previous separations resulting from migration, such as leaving behind children and parents (Brabeck et al, 2011). This will be addressed in an additional policy implication.

Current policies on immigration and legal status also pose practical, concrete barriers to successful acculturation in addition to their emotional and psychological impact. Brabeck et al (2011) found that workplace raids, employer demands for legal documents, increased risk of driving without a license, and the recent economic

downturn in the US contributed to underemployment and unemployment for many participants in their study, creating extreme financial hardship for many undocumented workers. Competition for the few jobs available for undocumented immigrants, along with the vulnerability of living without legal papers, led many participants to tolerate unfair pay, unsafe working conditions, extended hours, and lack of benefits, all of which would be unacceptable to those who could work legally and have more employment options. Additionally, being undocumented prevents an individual from legally obtaining a driver's license, obtaining benefits such as health insurance, or even registering for school.

Reyna et al (2013) indicated that, as stereotypical views of Latino immigrants inform policy decisions and legislation, policies and the inherent values and judgments contained within them inform public opinion through institutional sanction of oppression and discriminatory practices. Thus, if officials with prejudiced, negative views of Latino immigrants are charged with creating, maintaining, and changing immigration policies, the resulting policies which limit the rights of immigrants and cast undocumented individuals as criminals provide a "respectable" and concrete basis for hostility from the rest of society. If Latinos are only considered valuable in the community if they are living in the United States legally, a pathway to legal status for those already residing in the United States would have the effect of legitimizing their presence, removing barriers to acculturation and allowing these individuals to fully contribute to the host culture. It would also be a measure toward eliminating governmental sanctioning of discrimination against immigrants and providing a measure of safety and stability for those who choose to work toward a legal status.

Providing a path to obtaining legal status would also have a substantial positive economic impact for the United States (Immigration Policy Center, 2014). Past immigration policy measures, such as IRCA, demonstrate that workers with legal status earn more than workers who are undocumented. These extra earnings generate more tax revenue for federal, state, and local governments. Additionally, increase in income would trigger consumer spending, which sustains more jobs in domestic businesses. Recent studies suggest that the economic impact of a new legalization program would be substantial, amounting to tens of billions of dollars in added income as well as billions of dollars in additional tax revenue and hundreds of thousands of new jobs for all workers, immigrant and native-born (IPC, 2014).

Policy Changes to Reunite Families Separated by Immigration

Many of the participants in the study expressed feelings of sadness over separation from family members in their countries of origin, including one woman whose young daughter was left in El Salvador. There was a common sentiment that the support of these family members and the maintenance of close familial connections would have allowed women in the study to feel more comfortable in the host culture, as well as allowed them to better maintain cultural practices. Thus, legislation facilitating the reunion of families through immigration to the United States would likely improve acculturative outcomes. The Uniting American Families Act, which had been referred to the House Judiciary Committee as of February 2013, aims to achieve its goal of family

reunification through two objectives. The first is the reclassification of family "categories" and, in essence, a redefined concept of "family." As it stands, immediate family is, for purposed of immigration, defined as married spouses (heterosexual), children of that union, and "confirmed" children of either party (U.S. Library of Congress, 2010). The proposed reclassification of "immediate family" adds unmarried partners, same-sex domestic partners or spouses and their children, parents of either party, and siblings. In short, the Act recognizes that effects of separation are not confined to the individuals in a heterosexual marriage and their children; it acknowledges the effects on the rest of the family and on less "traditional" family units.

The second objective is the increase in total visas issued and reallocation of them in favor of family reunification, with specific numbers initially designated for each "category" of family. Should any visa quota not be fully utilized, the excess could then be added to categories in need of more. For example, should the allocated number of visas for siblings not be utilized, with 25,000 excess, those visas could then be granted to additional parents or children if they have already fulfilled their quota. Clearly, passage of this policy would allow families separated through immigration to reunite in the United States, providing stronger support systems for immigrants within the host community and potentially facilitating successful acculturation. In the context of this study, passage of this legislation would allow one participant to bring her six-year-old daughter to the United States; another could bring her parents who are living in poverty in a dangerous city.

Uniqueness of This Study

This study is unique in that it adds empirical evidence to the ongoing dialog in social welfare on the topic of social justice and the empowerment of a vulnerable population. The overwhelming bulk of published research around this group of women is based on health outcomes and serves to reinforce cultural stereotypes. More in-depth studies have been conducted on Latino immigrants, but the literature includes men, families, and children. Hispanic women have largely been ignored as subjects of rich, in-depth qualitative study.

United States Census data makes evident the fact that individuals of Hispanic ethnicity are an ever-growing portion of the population, particularly in New York. The Pew Hispanic Center (2011) estimates the number of legal Latino immigrants in New York at over two million. That data cannot even account for the number of Latino immigrants who are undocumented, yet are just as present in our society. The closest estimate was 645,000 according to the Fiscal Policy Institute (2010). This inquiry focused on how Latina immigrants to Suffolk County acculturate to the new culture, with the data coming directly from the study participants themselves, in their own words and reflecting their own perceptions of their life experiences. This focus is another aspect of the study that makes it unique, as previous studies on Latina immigrants have been primarily quantitative and sought information on health outcomes, education, and crime. This study contributes to the knowledge base by bringing to light in-depth narratives of these women and rich accounts of their lived experiences of adapting to a new cultural environment.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in the scope of the sample. The 30 participants self-selected for the study by responding to posted flyers, flyers distributed in-person, and referrals from within the community, and all interview data is based on self-reporting. Although efforts were made to attain maximum variation in the sample, nonetheless it evidences limited diversity of country of origin as the focus was on three Latin American countries out of many possibilities. The study is also limited in it confirmability as the data was coded and analyzed by only one researcher. The addition of a second researcher to concurrently code and analyze the data would have increased confirmability of the findings. Finally, the cultural differences between study participants and the researcher may have limited the willingness of some participants to be completely candid and thorough in their responses due to fear, anxiety, or distrust. The addition of a second researcher from the Latina culture might yield different responses or facilitate recruitment of a larger sample.

Concluding Statement

This study provided insight into a vulnerable population that has been underrepresented in social work research. Latina immigrants have been oppressed on the basis of their gender as well as their ethnicity, and that oppression has come from within their own culture in addition to the prejudice and discrimination experienced from without. While existing literature on this population effectively disseminates public health data and highlights many concrete needs of the Latino immigrant community, the

lack of equivalent qualitative studies has the effect of keeping the voices of these women unheard and perpetuating cultural stereotypes within all levels of society.

As a qualitative, grounded theory study using the lived experiences of Latina immigrants in Suffolk County to develop a model of acculturation that expands on findings by such researchers as Berry and Cohen, this model reflects the perceptions and realities of the participants and depicts trajectory of successful and unsuccessful acculturation from the perspectives of the participants. The level of success in acculturation comes from a series of choices and decisions made by the individual and her own sense of autonomy, starting with the decision to leave her country of origin. Success or lack thereof is indicated by the participant's own satisfaction with her level of acculturation, rather than being a judgment made by the researcher.

The findings from this study point to a number of implications for social work and professional education, future research directions and modification of methodology, and public policy. Any improvements in these areas would have a positive impact on the Latina immigrant population, as well as the larger immigrant community as a whole. On a personal note, I felt fortunate and honored that the women who chose to participate in my study were willing to put aside culturally-ingrained feelings of distrust for outsiders and meet with me to tell their stories. I consider it a privilege to be a part of empowering social work research and to help these women give voice to their experiences adapting to the culture in Suffolk County. This 38-year-old woman from Mexico can best verbalize the role of choice and autonomy for women who have come to live in the United States:

> Women are free here, and some do bad things with that freedom. Some do good things. I just want to live my life, and be a good wife and mother,

and take care of my family, and be happy and healthy. Other women have to do what is right for them, and if they are happy, that is the most important thing.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER (ENGLISH)

EARN A $25 GIFT CARD
as a volunteer in a research study!

ARE YOU A LATINA LIVING IN SUFFOLK COUNTY?
WERE YOU BORN IN ECUADOR, EL SALVADOR, OR MEXICO?

A doctoral student is conducting a study to explore the immigration experiences of Latina Females in Suffolk County.

PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS:

- **MUST BE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE**
- **MUST HAVE BEEN BORN IN ECUADOR, EL SALVADOR, OR MEXICO**
- **MUST LIVE IN SUFFOLK COUNTY**

Participants will be interviewed in their choice of English or Spanish, and will be compensated with a $25 gift card for their participation in this study. The interview may last for up to two hours.

Contact: Jennifer Wood, LMSW, DOCTORAL CANDIDATE
Cell: (631) 921-1962
Email: jewood816@gmail.com

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FLYER (SPANISH)

Gane una tarjeta de regalo de $ 25
como voluntario en un estudio de investigación!

¿ES USTED UN SALÓN DE LATINA DEL CONDADO DE SUFFOLK?

¿Nació en Ecuador, El Salvador, or Mexico?

Un estudiante de doctorado esta llevando a cabo un estudio para entender las experiencias de la inmigración de mujeres Latinas que viven en Long Island.

REQUISITOS DE LOS PARTICIPANTES:

- **DEBE SER AL MENOS 18 AÑOS DE EDAD**
- **Debe haber nacido en Ecuador, El Salvador, o Mexico**
- **Debe vivir en el condado de Suffolk, NY**

Los participantes serán entrevistados en su elección de Inglés o Español, y serán compensados por su participación en este estudio con una tarjeta de regalo de $25. Esta entrevista puede durar hasta dos horas.

Contacto: Jennifer Wood, LMSW, Candidato Doctoral

Celular: (631) 921-1962

Correo electrónico: jewood816@gmail.com

APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR RECRUITMENT METHOD MODIFICATION

Pamela Linden, Ph.D.
Jennifer Wood, LMSW, Doctoral Candidate
School of Social Welfare
Acculturation Experiences of Latina Immigrants in Suffolk County IRB #440115-3

We are requesting an amendment to our IRB-approved research project #440115-3. Due to cultural barriers made evident through our current recruitment activities, we are experiencing difficulty obtaining a sufficient number of participants for this project. At this time, we are permitted to recruit through posting of flyers in the community and referrals from a church serving members of the study population. We would like to expand these efforts to include in-person distribution of flyers at community events and in locations in which members of the population tend to congregate. These include:

- Health care centers (e.g. Brentwood Health Center)
- Places of worship (e.g. Churches in Brentwood, Central Islip, Patchogue)
- Retail shopping areas (e.g. supermarkets, clothing stores, bakeries, bodegas)
- Educational institutions (e.g. Suffolk Community College, Stony Brook University)
- Social welfare institutions (e.g. Department of Social Services)
- Libraries (e.g. Brentwood Public Library, Patchogue Medford Public Library)

We believe that, if permitted, this protocol will greatly improve our ability to obtain a sufficient number of participants for our study.

APPENDIX D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide v.3

June 2013

Jennifer Wood

The purpose of this interview is to understand the acculturation experience of Latina female immigrants to Suffolk County.

PAST

1. What was good about home?
2. What led to the decision to leave?
3. How did you feel about leaving?
4. Who did you leave behind when you left home?

IMMIGRATION PROCESS

1. Was the process of coming to the United States easy or difficult? Why?
2. Did you come to this country legally or illegally? Why?
3. Did you really want to come here, or were you forced to? Why?
4. Did anything happen while coming here that scared or upset you (traumatic)? What happened?
5. Was it very expensive to come here? How were you able to afford it?
6. How did you feel emotionally during the process of coming here?
7. How long did it take to get here? Why?

PRESENT/LIFE IN USA

1. Who is important in your life?
2. What activities are important to you?
3. What aspects of your culture have you been able to keep? How and why? (Food, customs, language, traditions, childrearing, spirituality, gender roles)

4. What aspects have you been unable to keep? Why?
5. How do you define your community here? What does it look like?
6. What is your role in your community?
7. Do you feel safe here (physical, emotional, psychological)? Why or why not?
8. Have things happened to you that have frightened or upset you? What were they?
9. How to you feel about the government here?
10. How do you feel about the American culture? Do you feel that you are part of it? Why or why not?
11. If you are not yet a citizen, would you like to be? Why or why not? What would be needed to become a citizen?
12. What are your hopes for your future?
13. Your children's/family's future?
14. How do you cope when things become difficult?
15. Do you have any regrets about coming here? If so, what and why?

Concluding Questions

1. Is there anything that occurred to you during the interview that you hadn't thought of before?
2. Is there anything else that you feel is important to your experience as an immigrant?
3. Did any part of this interview upset you? If so, what and why?

APPENDIX E: CONSENT SCRIPT (ENGLISH)

COMMITTEES ON RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
Established 1971

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Acculturation Experiences of Latina Immigrants and Implications for Policy and Future Theory
Principal Investigator: Dr. Pamela Linden, Ph.D.
Co-Investigators: Jennifer Wood, LMSW, Doctoral Candidate
Department: School of Social Welfare

You are being asked to be a volunteer in a research study. It is expected that we will have 40 participants in this study, all from Suffolk County.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is:

- to understand the process of immigrating to the United States as an adult Latina woman born in a Latin American nation.
- to learn how these women get used to living in a new culture and how they view their lives in their new countries.
- to explore how views of immigration in American society may affect these women living in America and with American culture.
- to explore what support systems Latina immigrants find after immigrating to the United States and Long Island.

PROCEDURES

If you decide to be in this study, your part will involve:

- Being interviewed in your chosen language by a bilingual researcher.
- You will be interviewed once, with the interview expected to last between one and two hours.
- The interview will be conducted at a mutually agreed-upon location.
- The interview will be recorded (sound only) using a digital recorder.

RISKS / DISCOMFORTS

The following risks/discomforts may occur as a result of you being in this study:

You may feel uncomfortable with topics discussed during the interview. You don't have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

BENEFITS

There is no benefit expected as a result of you being in this study. The information you share may help us to understand the life experiences of Latinas in Suffolk County.

PAYMENT TO YOU

For your participation in this study, you will be given a grocery gift card in the amount of $25.00.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Protecting Your Privacy in this Study

We will take steps to help make sure that all the information we get about you is kept private. Your name will not be used wherever possible. We will use a code instead. All the study data that we get from you will be kept locked up. The code will be locked up too. If any papers and talks are given about this research, your name will not be used. The audio recording from the interview conducted will be electronically transferred to the researcher's computer and coded, and the original recording deleted from the recording device.

We want to make sure that this study is being done correctly and that your rights and welfare are being protected. For this reason, we will share the data we get from you in this study with the study team, Stony Brook University's Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, applicable Institutional officials, and certain federal offices. However, if you tell us you are going to hurt yourself, hurt someone else, or if we believe the safety of a child is at risk, we will have to report this.

In a lawsuit, a judge can make us give him the information we collected about you.

COSTS TO YOU

There are no foreseeable costs to you as a participant in this study.

ALTERNATIVES

Your alternative to being in this study is to simply not participate.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT

- Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to be.
- You have the right to change your mind and leave the study at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty.

- Any new information that may make you change your mind about being in this study will be given to you.
- You will get a copy of this consent form to keep.
- You do not lose any of your legal rights by signing this consent form.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY OR YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT

- If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact Dr. Pamela Linden, Ph.D. at telephone # (631-444-3154).
- If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact Ms. Judy Matuk, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, (631) 632-9036, OR by e-mail, judy.matuk@stonybrook.edu.

APPENDIX F: CONSENT SCRIPT (SPANISH)

COMMITTEES ON RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
Established 1971

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Título del Proyecto: Experiencias de Aculturación de los Inmigrantes Latinas

e Implicaciones para las Políticas y Teoría de Futuro

Investigador principal: Dra. Pamela Linden, Ph.D.

Co-investigadores: Jennifer Wood, LMSW, Candidato Doctoral

Departamento: Escuela de Bienestar Social

Se le pide para ser voluntario en un estudio de investigación. Se prevé que contará con 40 participantes en este estudio, todos los de cualquiera de Nassau o el condado de Suffolk.

PROPOSITO

El propósito de este estudio es:

• para empezar a entender el proceso de inmigrar a los Estados Unidos como un adulto mujer Latina nacida en un país Latinoamericano.

• aprender cómo estas mujeres se acostumbran a vivir en una cultura nueva y cómo ven sus vidas en sus nuevos países.

• explorar cómo puntos de vista de la inmigración en la sociedad estadounidense puede afectar a estas mujeres que viven en Estados Unidos y con la cultura estadounidense.

• explorar lo que los sistemas de apoyo a inmigrantes latinas encontrar después de emigrar a los Estados Unidos y Long Island.

PROCEDIMIENTOS

Si usted decide participar en este estudio, su parte será necesario:

• Ser entrevistado en el idioma elegido por un investigador bilingüe.

• Usted será entrevistado una sola vez, con la entrevista durará entre una y dos horas.

• La entrevista se llevará a cabo en un lugar de acuerdo a los dos.

• La entrevista será grabada (sólo sonido) con un grabador digital.

RIESGOS Y MOLESTIAS

Los siguientes riesgos o molestias pueden ocurrir como resultado de su participación en este estudio:

Usted puede sentirse incómodo con los temas tratados durante la entrevista. Usted no tiene que contestar ninguna pregunta que no quiera contestar.

BENEFICIOS

No hay ningún beneficio esperado como resultado de su participación en este estudio. La información que se comparte puede ayudarnos a entender las experiencias de vida de las latinas en el condado de Suffolk

PAGO AL USUARIO

Por su participación en este estudio, se le dará una tarjeta de regalo de abarrotes en la cantidad de $25.00.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD

Cómo proteger su privacidad en este studio:

Tomaremos las medidas necesarias para ayudar a asegurarse de que toda la información que obtenemos acerca de usted se mantenga privada. Su nombre no se utilizará siempre que sea posible. Vamos a utilizar un código en su lugar. Todos los datos del estudio que obtenemos de usted se mantendrá bajo llave. El código será encerrado también. Si todos los papeles y las conversaciones se dan sobre esta investigación, su nombre no será utilizado. La grabación de audio de la entrevista será transferido electrónicamente a la computadora del investigador y un código y la grabación original se borra del dispositivo de grabación.

Queremos asegurarnos de que este estudio se está haciendo correctamente y que sus derechos y el bienestar están siendo protegidos. Por esta razón, vamos a compartir los datos que obtenemos de usted en este estudio con el equipo de estudio, el patrocinador del estudio (y los que trabajan para ellos), el Comité de la Universidad Stony Brook en investigaciones con sujetos humanos, aplicables funcionarios institucionales, y algunas oficinas federales. Sin embargo, si usted nos dice que se va a hacer daño, herir a alguien, o si creemos que la seguridad de un niño está en riesgo, vamos a tener que informar de ello.

En una demanda, un juez puede hacernos darle la información que hemos recopilado sobre usted.

COSTOS PARA USTED

No hay costes previsibles a usted como participante en este estudio.

ALTERNATIVAS

Su alternativa a participar en este estudio es simplemente no participar.

SUS DERECHOS COMO SUJETO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

- **Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Usted no tiene que estar en este estudio si no queremos ser.**

- **Usted tiene el derecho a cambiar de opinión y abandonar el estudio en cualquier momento y sin dar ninguna razón, y sin penalización.**

- **Cualquier información nueva que pueda hacerte cambiar de opinión acerca de participar en este estudio se le dará a usted.**

- **Usted recibirá una copia de este formulario de consentimiento para mantener.**

- **Usted no perderá ninguno de sus derechos legales al firmar este formulario de consentimiento.**

PREGUNTAS SOBRE EL ESTUDIO O SUS DERECHOS COMO SUJETO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

- **Si usted tiene alguna pregunta, duda o queja sobre el estudio, puede comunicarse con la Dra. Pamela Linden, Ph.D. # en el teléfono (631-444-3154).**

- **Si usted tiene alguna pregunta acerca de sus derechos como sujeto de investigación o si desea obtener información o la entrada de oferta, puede comunicarse con la Sra. Judy Matuk, el Comité para la Investigación en Seres Humanos, (631) 632-9036, o por correo electrónico, judy.matuk @ stonybrook.edu.**

APPENDIX G: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH)

Project Title: Acculturation Experiences of Latina Immigrants and Implications for Policy and Future Theory
Principal Investigator: Dr. Pamela Linden, Ph.D.
Co-Investigators: Jennifer Wood, LMSW, Doctoral Candidate
Department: School of Social Welfare

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. In what year were you born? ______________________________
2. From what country did you come to the United States? ______________________________
3. How long have you lived here? ____
4. What's your marital status? ____
5. Do you have children? If so, how many? ____
6. What is/are the age(s) if your child(ren)? ____
7. How many years of education have you had? ____

APPENDIX G: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE (SPANISH)

Título del Proyecto: Experiencias de Aculturación de los Inmigrantes Latinas

e Implicaciones para las Políticas y Teoría de Futuro

Investigador principal: Dra. Pamela Linden, Ph.D.

Co-investigadores: Jennifer Wood, LMSW, Candidato Doctoral

Departamento: Escuela de Bienestar Social

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **¿En qué año naciste? ________________________________**
2. **¿De qué país has venido a los Estados Unidos? ________________________________**
3. **¿Cuánto tiempo has vivido aquí? ____**
4. **¿Cuál es su estado civil? ____**
5. **¿Tiene hijos? Si es así, ¿cuántos? ____**
6. **¿Cuál es / son la edad (s) si su hijo (a)? ____**
7. **¿Cuántos años de educación ha tenido? ____**

APPENDIX H: DATA CODEBOOK

THEME	POSSIBLE CODES	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
IDENTIFIER	N/A	Each participant, to preserve confidentiality, is assigned an identifying code. The first letter of the code is the first initial. That is followed by an abbreviation for the country of origin (ES = El Salvador, Mx = Mexico, Ec = Ecuador). The next portion of the identifier is the legal status of the participant (IL = Illegal, L = Legal). The final component of the identifier is the number of the transcribed interview (an identifier ending in 19 means that this participant's interview was the	
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	ECUADOR EL SALVADOR MEXICO	Participants were born in one of three countries: El Salvador; Ecuador; or Mexico.	
AGE	NUMERICAL	Participant's age at the time of interview	
BIRTH YEAR	NUMERICAL	Year in which the participant was born	
LEGAL STATUS	LEGAL ILLEGAL	Refers to the current legality of the participant's presence in the United States. Illegal status means that, at the time of the interview, the participant was in this country without valid legal documentation. Status of "legal" means that the participant is authorized to reside in the United States.	Legal status of some may require additional explanation or description of unique circumstances
YEARS IN USA	NUMERICAL	The number of years the participant had been residing in the United States at the time of the interview.	
YEAR ENTERED USA	NUMERICAL	The year in which the participant arrived in the United States.	
MARITAL STATUS	SINGLE MARRIED PARTNERED DIVORCED WIDOWED	The marital status of the participant at the time of the interview.	"Partnered" refers to being in a committed relationship as opposed to casual dating.
CHILDREN	NONE YES NUMERICAL	Does the participant have children and, if so, how many? Ages of the children?	
LEVEL OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY	NONE SOME GOOD	Is the participant able to understand and speak English and, if so, how well? None = the participant is unable to understand or speak English, nor can she write in it or understood the written language. Some = the participant is able to carry on simple conversation in English, and may be able to understand some of the language as written. However, she most often speaks Spanish. Good = the participant is able to carry on an intensive conversation in English with little or no difficulty. She can read and write in English, and is equally comfortable speaking English or Spanish	
EDUCATION LEVEL	LESS THAN HS GRAD HS GRAD SOME COLLEGE COLLEGE GRADUATE OR HIGHER	What level of education has the participant completed, and was this level of education achieved in the USA or Country of Origin?	
ECONOMIC STATUS IN COO	NARRATIVE	Refers to the participant's perception of her economic status in her country of origin.	Uses quotes from interview.
ECONOMIC STATUS IN USA	NARRATIVE	Refers to the participant's perception of her economic status in the USA.	Uses quotes from interview.
ID AS RELIGIOUS?	NARRATIVE	Does the participant identify as religious or adhering to a particular religion? Is that identification in the USA different from how the participant identified in the country of origin?	Uses quotes from interview.
WANTED TO COME?	NARRATIVE	Whose idea was it for the participant to emigrate to the United States? Was it her choice or was the move forced upon her by someone else?	Uses quotes from interview.
ID AS COO OR USA?	COO USA NARRATIVE	Does the participant, at the time of the interview, identify more closely with her country of origin or the United States?	Uses quotes from interview.
CULTURAL PRACTICES?	NONE SOME MANY NARRATIVE	To what extent does the participant engage in cultural practices from her country of origin? None = participant does not practice any cultural traditions. Some = practices some cultural traditions. Many = practices many or exlusively cultural traditions	May include additional explanation or quotes from interviews.
TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES?	REJECT ACCEPT PASSIVELY ENACT EMBRACE NARRATIVE	To what extent does the participant, at the time of the interview, live in a manner consistent with traditional gender roles and expectations of the culture in her country of origin? Does she accept, reject, enact, or embrace them? Is her stance active or passive? Reject = the participant lives and thinks in a way that is contrary to the traditional gender roles of the Hispanic culture. An example of this could be working outside the home, pursuing further education, or divorcing an abusive spouse. Accept = the participant is aware of cutural gender roles and expectations and in agreement with those expectations and beliefs. Passively Enact = the participant may not actively consider the expected role of a woman in her home culture, but is indoctrinated to live according to those norms and does so. Embrace = the participant is actively aware of expectations of women in Hispanic culture and believes in them so strongly that she feels and expresses pride in adhering	Uses quotes from interview.
GEOGRAPHIC ISOLATION?	YES NO NARRATIVE	Does the participant live in a community that is ethnoculturally isolated? If so, does she emerge from her community to interact with members of USA culture outside of her ethnic enclave?	Uses quotes from interview.
DIVERSITY	HOMOGENOUS DIVERSE NARRATIVE	Does the participant experience homogeneity of life or is her social network more diverse? Is she open to, accepting of, welcoming of social diversity?	Uses quotes from interview.
WORKS FOR PAY OUTSIDE HOME?	YES NO	Does the participant work outside the home?	
XP DISCRIMINATION?	YES NO NARRATIVE	Has the participant experienced discrimination, bigotry, or hostility on the basis of her Latina culture?	Uses quotes from interview.
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?	NARRATIVE	To what degree is the participant aware of immigration policies and institutional attitudes toward immigrants? Does she feel that these policies and attitudes in any way impact her? Does she indicate any interest in being a part of social change for the immigrant community?	Uses quotes from interview.
CONFORM TO 3G?	YES NO	Does the life experience of the participant conform to the Three Generations theory of immigration (or Linear Assimilation Theory), which sets forth theoretical expectations and generalizations for the life experience of first-generation immigrants? According to this theory, the first-generation immigrant tends to retain the vast majority of the norms, values, and traditions of the home culture, including language, foods, celebrations, and family structure. They tend to live in geographic enclaves of families and individuals with similar ethnic origins and utilize businesses and services that cater to their ethnic group	
NOTES	N/A	Additional details of interest in this participant's shared experience.	